

PERCEPTIONS of the BODY and SACRED SPACE in LATE ANTIQUITY and BYZANTIUM



Edited by
JELENA BOGDANOVIĆ

ROUTLEDGE

Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium

Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium seeks to reveal Christian understanding of the body and sacred space in the medieval Mediterranean. Case studies examine encounters with the holy through the perspective of the human body and sensory dimensions of sacred space, and discuss the dynamics of perception when experiencing what was constructed, represented, and understood as sacred. The comparative analysis investigates viewers' recognitions of the sacred in specific locations or segments of space with an emphasis on the experiential and conceptual relationships between sacred spaces and human bodies. This volume thus reassesses the empowering aspects of space, time, and human agency in religious contexts. By focusing on investigations of human endeavors towards experiential and visual expressions that shape perceptions of holiness, this study ultimately aims to present a better understanding of the corporeality of sacred art and architecture. The research points to how early Christians and Byzantines teleologically viewed the divine source of the sacred in terms of its ability to bring together – but never fully dissolve – the distinctions between the human and divine realms. The revealed mechanisms of iconic perception and noetic contemplation have the potential to shape knowledge of the meanings of the sacred as well as to improve our understanding of the liminality of the profane and the sacred.

Jelena Bogdanović is Associate Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University, USA. Trained as an architect and an historian of art and architecture, she specializes in the architectural history of Byzantine, Slavic, Western European, and Islamic cultures in the Balkans and the Mediterranean.



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Ames, Iowa

Note

- 1 Annemarie Weyl Carr, "ICMA at the Byzantine Studies Association of North America: Perspective of the Body and Sacred Space in the Medieval Mediterranean." *The International Center of Medieval Art News* 2 (2013), 7.

Abbreviations for collections and widely used primary sources

PG Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857–1866)

PL Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–1880)

Dionysius Areopagita (the same as Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita)

DN De divinis nominibus (On the Divine Names)

CH De coelesti hierarchia (Celestial Hierarchy)

EH De ecclesiasica hierarchia (Ecclesiastical Hierarchy)

Introduction

Encounters with the holy

Jelena Bogdanović

This book, *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, joins the burgeoning scholarship on the sacred and, by asking questions about the ways medieval people encountered the holy, offers new perspectives on the understanding of the role of the body and perceptible dimensions of sacred space in the medieval Mediterranean. For the Christians in the medieval Mediterranean, “the sacred” became manifested through the presence of Christ, who “became flesh and *tabernacled* among us” (Jn 1:14). For the devotees, the humanity of Jesus Christ resulted in interconnected notions about the holy expressed through the human body and place as a segment of space that is physical, localized, specific, and rational.¹ However, in Christian terms, the seemingly stark divisions between body and soul, mind and senses, place and space in the abstract are constantly negotiated and balanced between God’s revelation among humans in the locales of inhabited space and ultimately the immaterial and placeless God.² Moreover, as Michel de Certeau contends, the encounters with the holy for Christians imply their relationships to God as *the event* of Jesus Christ.³ Indeed, de Certeau is correct that the event of Christ inaugurated Christianity but also subsequent events within the life of the church, which are seemingly paradoxical, as they are necessarily different from the first, inaugural event while at the same time are perceived as being focused on and faithful to this foundational event.⁴ When analyzing place, memory, and identity of the sacred, Philip Sheldrake wittingly remarked that even the place of Jesus, the Tomb of Christ, which is conspicuously empty of any bodily remains, points to the perpetual movement of the faithful “following after” the divine in the direction of Jesus’ departure.⁵ Therefore, the holy is never inactive and, even if perceived through bodily senses and the physical characteristics of space, for the believers remains inclusive of its abstract qualities.

Yet, how do we study these encounters with the holy? Scholarly studies of the sacred are continually suspended between positivist and interpretative studies; between the increasingly theorizing search for objective and objectified understanding of the sacred studied through palpable and verifiable references and those searches that attempt to address, albeit uncomfortably, the elusive, abstract, and ideal features of the sacred by questioning as how given individuals within given contexts interpret these abstract qualities of sacred phenomena. Hence, many

studies of the sacred, regardless of the primary interest of the discipline in the material world, revolve around the understanding of the material, inhabited world as critical for the perception of the holy. Various phenomenological approaches address the cognitive understanding of direct experiences related to body and space. Semiotics enriches the ways in which we make meaning of various material objects associated with the holy. For archeologists and art and architectural historians of the medieval Mediterranean, the starting point in material culture comes as an expected response. However, in the parlance of the current scholarly discourse on the sacred and its corporeality, the scholarly split is grounded in the very definition of the sacred and how the sacred relates to the forces (agents) that mediate the sacred and the capacity (agency) of the sacred to act in a given locale. At the risk of oversimplification, as Sonia Hazard reasons, it can be stated that for some researchers, the sacred is a constructed sociopolitical discourse amongst humans as agents, recurrently studied as cohesive, idealized groups as mediatory forces that allow us to address the agency of the sacred through the contextualized material world.⁶ Other scholars align with teleological views, looking at the final causes, design, and purpose in the abstract, wherein the material world is acting as an agent and is mediating the ideal, divine agency. In each case, human agency and the locale of the sacred remain present in these scholarly debates. Human agency is examined either through the human body most literally understood or through various material objects that reflect the embodiment of human encounters with the holy, while the locale of the sacred is habitually examined through various material forms of framing the sacred space. The various approaches used, however, even if not mutually exclusive, are often conflicting in that they offer different conclusions and hence are rarely simultaneously used and balanced within selected studies. Hence, most studies examine “the sacred” from the perspective of the creation of sacred space, while others turn to the body.

Without going into detailed historiographical overview, from the perspective of sacred space in particular, the core of the division between the positivist and non-positivist studies can be related to Émile Durkheim’s and Mircea Eliade’s⁷ paradigmatic distinction between “the sacred” and “the profane” as a characteristic of all religious beliefs. Their approach was received with some opposition by those who study the holy. Eliade defined the sacred as a transcendent reference to God; positioned the holy in space, time, and cosmology; and explained that the holy becomes accessible to religious people (*homo religiosus*) through the breakthrough experience or the revelation of the sacred, which he termed *hierophany*.⁸ Scholars in various disciplines of religious studies, sociology, anthropology, archeology, and art and architectural history engaged with Eliade’s paradigm, addressing the sacred from the perspective of the profane and material world.⁹ The major concern, however, for many scholars is how Eliade defined the sacred in opposition to the profane and in universal, cosmological terms as “a primordial experience, homologizable to a founding of the world,”¹⁰ and that “the manifestation of the sacred, ontologically founds the world.”¹¹

Eliade’s concept puts human agency as secondary to the absolute and ideal sacred, and allows *homo religiosus* to acquire their true identity only through the participation in the transcendental sacred. In response to the need to contextualize

the sacred space as a cultural and social construct, some studies would expand into the nuanced research by Yi-Fu Tuan. By merging social and phenomenological studies, Tuan aims to explain how the abstract, universal space turns into concrete place of the sacred and to contextualize the sacred through human experiences and perceptions.¹² Tuan's understanding of space as being simultaneously both physical and perceived is enriched by the studies of lived (experienced) space, which can be understood through the actions of those who inhabit and use such spaces.¹³ Medieval scholars have engaged with the notions of lived space and Henri Lefebvre's thesis that the production of space is a social construct.¹⁴ In turn, their investigations of sacred space often focus on actual architectural framing as the human-constructed signifier of sacred space and understood through the religious rituals that occurred within them.¹⁵ Alexei Lidov proposes *hierotopy* as a deeply ontological approach for studies of sacred spaces and their creation.¹⁶ The *hierotopical* approach in the process of investigation of the sacred does not separate the sacred, as divine presence characterized by divine, non-human will, from the human-created installations that aim to actualize in specific locales of space the memories of *hierophanies*.¹⁷

The scholarly split on the studies of the body can be followed within numerous threads of essentially positivist scholarship and attempts to understand and interpret the role of the body from within the medieval perspective. The major issue is the question of whether the physical body is separated from soul and mind and whether the body should be studied as matter. The Incarnational event is one of the greatest Christian mysteries, when God acquired human form and body, and yet after the Resurrection there was no palpable evidence of Christ's body. Therefore, for a while, in medieval scholarship there prevailed tendencies to focus on the transcendental quality of human presence beyond the corruptible, mortal body. When studied, the body is related to a passive receptacle of the soul and the capacity of the body to receive divine agency (divine grace). In medieval, and in particular Byzantine studies, this trend was most fruitful in the studies of holy icons and holy people (saints).¹⁸ This trend also resulted in studies of the surface of a body as a metaphor of identity and the body of the society.¹⁹ Hence, gender studies or studies of dress and costume correspondingly became prominent in social studies of the medieval body.²⁰

As studies of the body shift to understanding the body as a site of lived experience, aligning with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty,²¹ they include, but are not restricted to, the embodiment.²² Nathan Dennis highlights in his work that,

in a response to the legacy of Marcel Mauss' and Alfred Gell's anthropological models of inanimate agency in human ritual, medieval scholars are increasingly interested in the active agency in human body, material objects that represent the embodiment such as religious icons, and their lived rather than static presence in sacred space.²³

With the introduction of the concept of "spatial icons" by Alexei Lidov as iconic imagery in space or as spatial experience of the sacred, not only the structured space of sacred icons²⁴ but also the totality of sacred space that allows for

the interactions between divine and human agency can be contemplated and perceived via a variety of senses as spatial icons.²⁵

This volume, *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, addresses a range of encounters with the sacred in the medieval Mediterranean examined through the perceptions of the body and sacred space. Perception is here defined as the process of viewing and interpreting based on personal as well as cultural information, predicated upon and shaped by conditioned expectations, within a shared visual and conceptual language. The chapters in this volume discuss the complex dynamics of perception employed when experiencing what was constructed, represented, and understood as sacred. The comparative studies represented by our collected chapters include investigations of human experiences and perceptions of the sacred in specific locations or segments of space with a focus on the relationships between sacred spaces and bodies and the conceptual relationships between religious images, holy persons, and objects within sacred space. The volume thus reassesses multiple, empowering aspects of space, time, and human agency in the medieval Mediterranean. As our research shifts from exploring aspects of holiness, defined as much by viewers as visual presentations, to investigations of human endeavors towards experiential and visual expression that shape and influence perceptions of holiness, the volume ultimately aims at a better understanding of the corporeality of sacred art and architecture and its central role in conveying meanings and ideas fundamental to their production.

Written by philosophers, art and architectural historians, and architects trained in various schools of thought, this volume gathers eight chapters. All of the chapters focus on the perceptions of the body and sacred space examined from various perspectives, and are grouped by the primary locale of the sacred they analyze. By starting with the acknowledgment of the immaterial and placeless sacred in cosmological studies of the divine, the first chapter by Filip Ivanović introduces the philosophical understanding of the body and material world in the aesthetics of Dionysius the Areopagite. The choice of examining the thought of Dionysius the Areopagite is deliberate. Dionysius the Areopagite is an early major philosophical reference, which influenced many aspects of medieval culture. Texts by the Areopagite are known to be the least Christological of all influential medieval texts and especially in relation to those later developed under Christological doctrines such as those written by Maximus the Confessor, for example.²⁶ Therefore, the opening discussion on the role of body and material, inhabited world within a wider philosophical framework, allows us to assess the formulation and materialization of sacredness in more general terms and to ask how then medieval people in the Mediterranean perceived the sacred through interconnected relationships between the body and sacred space.

Many scholars of medieval religiosity, starting with the perceived stark division between the eternal divine and ephemeral corporeality would emphasize tendencies towards transcendence and spirit at the expense of the matter or would study the body in negative terms.²⁷ Ivanović's study of Dionysius' thought on the participatory beauty of the divine in heavenly and earthly realms reestablishes the

relationships between the body and embodiment in the material world and their meanings for medieval Christians in a positive way. Hence, even if not speaking of sacred space nor place directly, the Areopagite texts refer to the inhabited, material world and the heavenly realm that is structured along heavenly orders with bodiless angels, thereby suggesting that the body presupposes physical space. Simultaneously, the Areopagite thought allows for the discussion of the perceptions of the body and sacred space within the framework of nonnegotiable differences between the material and heavenly realms and the need to examine them together.²⁸

The subsequent chapters probe methodological questions on the perceptions of holiness through selected empirical case studies. The case studies, as a kind of micro-locals of the sacred, focus on specific icons, religious objects, and installations and their settings that reveal human–divine interactions so that the sacred is delivered to the devotees and becomes palpable. Without any commitment to a unified theoretical agenda, each chapter then expands the analysis with relevant research framework and textual sources including expansive philosophical and theological thought that can aid in understanding the perception of these objects and their relationships to the body and sacred space. Body is here studied as a body of the believers and devotees, and as the sacred body either embodied in the holy relics and icons or understood more expansively as a liturgical body and transcendental body of the sacred. The locales for sacred spaces are also diverse and range from ecclesiastical settings in churches, baptisteries, or private chapels to those in civic and palatial contexts.

In Part II, *The Sacred Made Palpable*, three chapters examine in particular the perception of the sacred through iconic images of sacred figures and their strategic placement within religious and palatial settings, highlighting the question to what extent these idealized images and especially venerated settings influenced the perception of the human and liturgical body as a vehicle for delivering the sacred to the faithful. A question that emerges from within this in-depth analysis of monumental icons, imperial sacred images, and influences of icons on the perception of the human body is directly related to the question to what extent the animated agency of the icons can be applied to the animated, living agency of their spatial settings. Four case studies in Part III, *The Sacred Delivered*, then address questions on the deliverance of the sacred and ontological references in the wider framework of the corporeality of sacred space and sacred body.

The case studies in this volume are not intended to be comprehensive but rather a detailed and selective overview of the various ways in which medieval Christians encountered the holy with particular investigations into the role of the body and sacred space in the human–divine interactions. The volume also aims to contribute to the ongoing scholarly search to find the balance between highly abstract theoretical models about the perceptions of the sacred and important segments of the material culture that include archeology, art, and architecture. By highlighting the relationships between the body and space, the book also aims to recover the traces and memories of the sacred and to give voice to diverse devotees who were actively engaged in the sacred events.

Notes

- 1 Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred. Place, Memory and Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 7.
- 2 Ibid., 30–31.
- 3 Michel de Certeau, “How Is Christianity Thinkable Today?” In *Postmodern God*, ed. Graham Ward (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 135–158, esp. 142.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, 30–31.
- 6 On contemporary discussions on agency and agents in religious studies, see Sonia Hazard, “Agency, the Idea of Agency, and the Problem of Mediation in America’s God and Secularism in Antebellum America.” *Church History* 84, no. 3 (2015), 610–615.
- 7 Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915), 36–42; Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1961), esp. 20–21; Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Cleveland: World, 1958), 1.
- 8 See Mircea Eliade, “The World, the City, the House.” In *Experience of the Sacred: Reading in the Phenomenology of Religion*, eds. S. B. Twiss and W. H. Conser, Jr. (Hanover, London: UPNE, 1992), 188–199. On *hierophany*, see also Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 6.
- 9 On the role of *homo religiosus* in ancient Mediterranean civilizations, see, for example, J. Ries, A. Motte, and N. Spineto, eds., *Les civilisations méditerranéennes et le sacré* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004). Then again, Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton, eds., *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016) and Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) base their research around Mircea Eliade’s division between the sacred and profane but examine the sacred space as defined from within the private and public domain of secular realms. On the stark division between the sacred and profane and the need to bring them as close as possible when investigating religious societies, see also Alicia Walker and Amanda Luyster, eds., *Negotiating Secular and Sacred in Medieval Art: Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).
- 10 Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, esp. 20–21.
- 11 Ibid., 21.
- 12 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001 [1977]).
- 13 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), especially chapters “Spatial Architectonics” and “From Absolute Space to Abstract Space”; Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), especially chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6; and Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell 2014, [1996]).
- 14 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. See, for example, Alain Dierkens and Anne Morelli, eds., *Topographie du sacré: l’emprise religieuse sur l’espace* (Bruxelles: Editions de l’université de Bruxelles, 2008).
- 15 See, for example, Eric Palazzo, *L’espace rituel et le sacré dans le christianisme: la liturgie de l’autel portatif dans l’Antiquité et au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); Bonna D. Wescoat and Robert G. Ousterhout, eds., *Architecture of the Sacred Space, Ritual, and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Church, and Community* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 16 Alexei Lidov, *Иеротопия: пространственные иконы и образы-парадигмы в византийской культуре* [*Hierotopy: Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine*

- Culture] (Moscow: Theoria, 2009); Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces* (Moscow: Indrik, 2009); Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy: Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006).
- 17 See, for example, Lidov, *Heirotopy*, 2009, esp. 10–12.
 - 18 The scholarship on icons is immense. See, for example, Robin Cormack, *Icons* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Alfredo Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Getty Museum, 2006); Lilia Evseyeva et al., *A History of Icon Painting: Sources, Traditions, Present Day* (Moscow: Grand-Holding Publishers; UK: Distributor of English ed. Orthodox Christian Books, 2005); Konrad Onasch and Annemarie Schnieper, *Icons. The Fascination and the Reality* (New York: Riverside Book, 1997); Kurt Weitzmann et al., *The Icon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992); Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art*, Byzantios 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).
 - 19 Jacques Le Goff, *Une histoire du corps au Moyen Âge* (Paris: L. Levi, 2003); Nadejje Laneyrie-Dagen, *L'invention du corps: la représentation de l'homme du Moyen Âge à la fin du XIX siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006). See also books by Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons*, and Jean Wirth, *L'image du corps au Moyen Âge* (Firenze: SISMELE Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013) that examine the homology between the profane and sacred in visual representations of people in icons and portraits.
 - 20 Among recent books, see, for example, Thelma K. Thomas et al., *Designing Identity: The Power of Textiles in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Maureen C. Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, c. 800–1200* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).
 - 21 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*. C. Smith, trans. (London: Routledge, 1962).
 - 22 See the concise summary of the trends in the research of the body in archeology in Rosemary A. Joyce, “Archaeology of the Body.” *The Annual Review of Anthropology* (2005), 139–158.
 - 23 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. W. D. Halls, trans. (London: Routledge, 1990); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Nicoletta Isar, “‘Xopós of Light’: Vision of the Sacred in Paulus the Silentiary’s Poem *Descriptio S. Sophiae*.” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 28 (2004), 215–242; Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010). See also chapter by Dennis in this volume, Chapter 6.
 - 24 See Cécile Voyer and Eric Sparhubert, eds., *L'image médiévale: fonctions dans l'espace sacré et structuration de l'espace cultuel* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).
 - 25 On spatial icons, see, for example, Lidov, *Hierotopy*, 2009, 7.
 - 26 Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle de l'écclesia byzantine: la Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur dans la culture philosophique de l'antiquité tardive* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005).
 - 27 Le Goff, *Une histoire du corps au Moyen Âge*.
 - 28 In her inspiring work, Patricia Miller Cox, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) even posits that such a positive “material” turn happened between the fourth and seventh centuries.



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Part I

The immaterial and placeless sacred



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1 Images of invisible beauty in the aesthetic cosmology of Dionysius the Areopagite

Filip Ivanović

Famous for his concepts of light and hierarchy, detailed theory of divine names, and cryptic use of apophatic and cataphatic language, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite became one of the most important thinkers of Christian Late Antiquity, his pseudonymity giving him the authority second only to the Apostles. The greatest minds of medieval philosophy, such as Maximus the Confessor, Gregory Palamas, John Scotus Eriugena, and Thomas Aquinas, were inspired and influenced by the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Apart from his theology, philosophy of language or soteriology, Dionysius' aesthetics and hierarchical doctrine have been of paramount importance for the further development of medieval culture, in both East and West, not just in terms of philosophy and/or theology but also in the context of history of art and architecture. An entire set of ideas, developed by the mysterious author through metaphysical speculation and sacramental interpretation, found their expression in the theory of icons or church architecture, just to mention two examples. The understanding of sensible things as "echoes" of divine beauty and wisdom, or the elaborate analysis of sacred rites, manifesting the divine mystery in a physical space, made Dionysius an inevitable source for any kind of serious investigation into the origins and developments of medieval art and architecture in, and beyond, the Mediterranean. In this chapter I shall focus on the theory of hierarchies and connect it to the conception of beauty in order to offer a better insight into what is Dionysius' stance on materiality.

In the ambit of his cosmological structure, the Areopagite develops the system of the two hierarchies, celestial and ecclesiastical, of which the former concerns divine intelligences (angels), while the latter is called "our" hierarchy, since it refers to the inhabited world. According to Dionysius, "a hierarchy is a sacred order (τάξις), a state of understanding (ἐπιστήμη), and an activity (ἐνέργεια) approximating as closely as possible to the divine."¹ This is in fact not just a definition of the hierarchy, but it is a brief recapitulation of the entire Dionysian concept of the world – order, knowledge, and activity are its main characteristics, while the supreme goal is approaching God, i.e., acquiring likeness and oneness with him. That is why God himself is the leader of hierarchy's understanding and activity, and the hierarchy bears the mark of God and causes its members to be his images. That is why the hierarchy is unwaveringly "looking at the comeliness of God (θειοτάτην εὐπρέπειαν)."² The hierarchy then conforms to God and leads

to the imitation of him, while its first and principal commitment is to beauty, “so simple, so good, so much the source of perfection.”³ It is surely not by chance that of all the names of God, Dionysius chose Beauty and placed the hierarchy in the aesthetic sphere. Hierarchy as knowledge means light which comes from Beauty, while hierarchy as activity means illumination,⁴ enlightenment of different hierarchical ranks in harmony with its archetype, which is nothing else but the beauty, the divine comeliness (εὐπρέπεια).⁵ This leads to the imitation of God, which means perfection of the members of the hierarchy. This is “a perfect arrangement, an image of the beauty of God (εἰκόνα τῆς θεαρχικῆς ὡραιότητος), which sacredly works out the mysteries of its own enlightenment in the orders and levels of understanding of the hierarchy.”⁶

The rising up to God and contemplation of the hierarchies happens with the help of material things, which are according to our nature. These material means of guidance are themselves beautiful because they reflect the hidden, invisible beauty:

Hence, any thinking person realizes that the appearances of beauty are signs of an invisible loveliness. The beautiful odors which strike the senses are representations of a conceptual diffusion. Material lights are images of the outpouring of an immaterial gift of light.⁷

Just as the beauty of material things is a sign of an invisible beauty, so orders and ranks in the hierarchies are images of the harmony of the divine realm. The Eucharist is a symbol of participation in Jesus, and so “the source of spiritual perfection provided us with perceptible images of those heavenly minds,”⁸ which happens out of his concern for us. It represents a concession to our imperfect nature, which has the task to become more perfect and more godlike. What is important to note is that Dionysius’ use of “image” does not imply some kind of obscuration or shadowy imitation of the ideal; on the contrary, image has an ontological value, in fact it reveals the ideal and is a real presence.⁹ That is why Dionysius is not interested in the artistic aspects of image or of its aesthetic conceptions. For him, the purpose of images and symbols, aesthetic objects, is anagogy, and not artistic pleasure:

The Word of God makes use of poetic imagery when discussing these formless intelligences [angels] but, as I have already said, it does so not for the sake of art, but as a concession to the nature of our own mind. It uses scriptural passages in an uplifting fashion as a way, provided for us from the first, to uplift our mind in a manner suitable to our nature.¹⁰

The purpose is to discover the hidden beauty:

There are too those other sacred pictures boldly used to represent God, so that what is hidden may be brought out into the open and multiplied, what is unique and undivided may be divided up, and multiple shapes and forms be

given to what has neither shape nor form. All this is to enable the one capable of seeing the beauty hidden within these images to find that they are truly mysterious, appropriate to God, and filled with a great theological light.¹¹

Therefore, the Areopagite's aesthetics has an ontological and anagogical, rather than a poetic, significance.

All members of the hierarchies share in God, which means that they share in the Good and the Beautiful.¹² Angels, members of the celestial hierarchy, "live in a fashion surpassing other living things," and their knowledge is beyond reason, so "they desire and participate in the Beautiful and the Good in a way far above the things which exist."¹³ This is no wonder, since they are much closer to the Good, and so they participate in it more than others. This is in accordance with Dionysius' view that everything has a share in God in a proportionate way, i.e., according to its own capacity, and that is why angels' participation is of a greater extent.

The first rank of angels (seraphim, cherubim, thrones) is the closest to God, and their likeness to God is completely uncontaminated, so they have a primary participation in "the knowledge of the divine lights." However, they too are contemplative, but not, as lower ranks, of symbols or of sacred writings, but because they are full of light beyond any knowledge and "are filled with a transcendent and triply luminous contemplation of the one who is the cause and the source of all beauty (καλλοποιου καὶ ἀρχικοῦ κάλλους)."¹⁴ They possess a pure vision which is granted to them by the primordial light of God, and the perfection of their activity stands in noetic contemplation, noetic communion with Jesus and knowledge of divine work – by the primordial power (πρωτουργῶ δυνάμει) they participate in theurgy and philanthropy.¹⁵

These angels, being closest to God, "dance" around the eternal knowledge of him, and have a special priority in communicating with God and sharing in his work. They have a proper share in the divine knowledge, and imitate "as far as possible, the beauty of God's condition and activity (καλῶν ἑξέων τε καὶ ἐνεργειῶν)."¹⁶ These angels are therefore enlightened directly by the Godhead. Their task is to transmit the enlightenment to lower ranks, since that is the all-embracing principle established by "the divine source of all order."¹⁷ This order makes the hierarchy divine and harmonious, and "is copied by our own hierarchy which tries to imitate angelic beauty (ἀγγελικὴν εὐπρέπειαν) as far as possible."¹⁸ In this way, the entire cosmos, composed of the two hierarchies, is an image of the divine beauty, so that the cosmos itself is beautiful and harmonious. The aesthetic value of the cosmos is highlighted not only by using expressions like symmetry¹⁹ or harmony,²⁰ but also, as Roques notes, by the prefix εὖ – which Dionysius often uses to coin εὐκοσμία or εὐταξία or εὐμετρία.²¹ This is evident in a passage from *The Divine Names* where Dionysius speaks of Justice as a name of God because he "distributes their due proportion (εὐμετρίαν), beauty (κάλλος), rank (εὐταξίαν), arrangement (διακόσμησιν), their proper and fitting place and order (πάσας διανομὰς καὶ τάξεις)."²² This means that beauty is not only the cause of beauty in each particular being, but it also refers to the relationship between beings, thus placing them correctly and accordingly in a beautiful and harmonious

arrangement. This is why Dionysius so often uses the word εὐπρέπεια, as Putnam notes:

Perhaps, too, this preoccupation with harmony leads him to adopt the word εὐπρέπεια which usually means comeliness or exterior charm, when he ponders the beauty of the hierarchies. Derived as it is from πρέπω, to fit or suit, εὐπρέπεια carries with it the connotation of order and thus becomes an apt term for the spiritual beauty of angels and men, arrayed in seemly fashion before the eyes of God.²³

Since the human hierarchy is an image of the celestial one, then it too is defined as “an inspired, divine, and divinely worked understanding, activity, and perfection.”²⁴ The superiors of that hierarchy are enlightened by Jesus himself who, as a source, underlies all hierarchy. So the superiors are assimilated into his light, while “as for us, with that yearning for beauty (τῶν καλῶν ἔρωτι) that raises us upwards (and that is raised up) to him, he pulls together all our many differences.”²⁵ Beauty here works as the object of eros, while eros is the attractive force which leads us to him who is the principle of unity in which all our differences are pulled together. Unity, or wholeness, then, is a crucial mark of beauty – it implies identity, perfection, and selfhood.²⁶

The hierarchical activity is imparted by superiors to subordinates, while subordinates follow their superiors and help in advancing their subordinates. This is how the hierarchy is a harmonious arrangement, and it is “because of this inspired, hierarchical harmony (ιεραρχικῆς ἁρμονίας) each one is able to have as great as possible a share in him who is truly beautiful, wise, and good.”²⁷ Not only that each being shares in “him who is truly beautiful,” but beauty, wisdom, and goodness are the source and the cause of the harmony that exists in the hierarchy; they create both the hierarchy, as an arrangement, and all the beings, as its constituents. Thus beings are beautiful both individually and collectively.

The archetypal beauty lies in the sacraments, within the hierarchy, which are the manifestations of something beyond our reality, something that we need to discover under “a unifying and unveiled light.” The rites have a splendid and beautiful exterior appearance, under which the true beauty is hidden, accessible only to “people of intelligence.”²⁸ Beauty, then, “appears in every manifestation of the unmanifest,” and thus it represents “the sacredness of everything apparently profane.”²⁹ Clearly, the rites happening in a church, in a physical space, are a manifestation of invisible divine mystery – lights, odors, and hymns reveal glimpses of divine beauty and angelic chants, while the very space in which all this is happening points to the heavenly sphere. The church and the sacraments are a connecting point between visible and invisible, between heaven and earth.

Humans hold an eminent position in the creation, since they were made in God’s image; from his archetypal beauty they received the divine form, and from his goodness they received being and life. This made it possible for us to ascend to God and to participate in the divine ἔξις. The ultimate proof of God’s care for us was his taking on our own nature – the Incarnation. He became one of us, a fact

that “allowed us, as those equal in birth, to enter into communion with it and to acquire a share of its own true beauty.”³⁰ The event of Incarnation represents the watershed of all human life; it is a calling to communion with the divine, a complete change of nature, and a reception of mysterious divine light, which makes all shadows vanish, saves souls, and adorns such deiform minds with a formless beauty (ἀνείδεον κάλλεσι).³¹ Here the formless beauty³² does not mean ugliness or lesser beauty, as in the realm of perceptible, but it means transcendent beauty, which is on the other side, beyond the perceptible world, and it is precisely in that realm beyond that a deified mind is found, and it is that transcendent beauty that adorns it in that state.

Humans, however, are not pure intelligences, but are made as composite beings, possessing both soul and body. How does, then, the matter fit into Dionysius’ ideas about deified minds adorned by formless, transcendent, beauty? First, it is important to note that intellect should not be understood in the contemporary sense of the word but rather as the center and summation of all lesser functions, including both discursive reason and sense perception. Dionysius is precisely one of those who argue that we do not know only through our “noetic” function, but also through the senses: “But also sense-perceptions themselves are echoes of wisdom.”³³ As a matter of fact, according to the Areopagite, we do not know God away or apart from senses, but precisely through them, and the human being is deified not only in his soul, but also in both his body and soul.³⁴ In his own words:

Among the unholy there are some who ridiculously believe that our bodies experience a dissolution of being. Others think that the link of body and soul is broken forever since, as they imagine, it would be inappropriate for souls to be trammelled with a body in the midst of the godlike life and blessedness. Such people, because of their inadequate acquaintance with divine understanding (ἐπιστήμη), overlook the fact that Christ has already provided the example of a human life conforming perfectly to God . . . No sacred men will ever fall into such error, for they know that their whole being will be granted the peace which will make them Christlike.³⁵

Since God as beauty is the cause of everything, then beauty is also the cause of matter. That is why the matter, the body, cannot be evil, because “ugliness and disease are a defect in form and a lack of due order.” In fact, it is not evil, but a lesser beauty. The body depends on beauty, so “if beauty, form, and order could be destroyed completely the body itself would disappear.”³⁶ This follows logically from the presupposition that God is beauty, and that all beauty in creation derives from him; furthermore, the form (εἶδος) is in fact thought beforehand in God – God is the εἰδεάρχης, and he is the form which gives form to all that is without form, he “is a unique formal cause, in virtue of the pre-existence of form within him and of his support of forms as they exhibit themselves in the outer world”³⁷ so it follows that “if you take away the One, there will survive neither whole nor part nor anything else in the creation.”³⁸ Something similar can be found in Plotinus’ *Enneads*, where he says that the absolute ugly is something that has

not been entirely mastered by form,³⁹ that we feel “the magnificent beauty of the Exemplar,” and “the Beauty sprung from this world is, itself, a copy of That.”⁴⁰ Therefore, the beauty of this world is a mere likeness, a copy, of the Beauty of the Exemplar, and so for Plotinus the one who sees beautiful shapes in body should not pursue them since “he must know them for copies, vestiges, shadows.”⁴¹ Plotinus does, however, say that “the material thing becomes beautiful by communicating in the thought that flows from the Divine,”⁴² but, nevertheless, he sees matter as the principle of evil and the cause of evil in soul.⁴³ Contrary to him, Proclus completely rejects the idea of matter being evil and argues indeed that matter is produced by the good.⁴⁴ Interestingly for our topic, he unfolds this view that matter is not evil in his *De malorum subsistentia*, a work extensively used by Dionysius in his own treatment of evil.⁴⁵ Evidently, the Areopagite comes much closer to the views of Proclus than to those of Plotinus – while for Dionysius body is not evil, but beautiful, or, at least, it is “a lesser beauty,” for Plotinus “there is a good deal between being body and being beautiful.”⁴⁶ Putnam quotes a nice passage from Gregory of Nyssa’s *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, which might as well be one of Dionysius’ sources:

As with corporeal beauty, the beauty is first in the living person who serves as model and secondarily in what is expressed in its image by imitation; so likewise, human nature as the image of the supernatural beatitude presents also the marks of the beauty of the good by reflecting its blessed attributes.⁴⁷

Dionysius’ positive attitude towards matter and body as a glimpse of the divine beauty logically leads to the appreciation of the entire world as beautiful. The three attributes mentioned in a previous passage, beauty, form, and order,⁴⁸ together with another three, namely harmony, friendship, and community,⁴⁹ describe the wisely created cosmos and all things in it:

Still, as I have said already, we must learn about Wisdom from all things. As Scripture says, Wisdom has made and continues always to adapt everything. It is the cause of unbreakable accommodation and order of all things and it is forever linking the goals of one set of things with the sources of another and in this fashion it makes a thing of beauty of the unity and the harmony of the whole.⁵⁰

The end of what comes before is tied with the beginning of what comes after, so that the world appears arranged according to beauty and ordered in a harmonious way. All this is possible because the order comes from beauty, i.e., from its source, and so the order itself represents a reflection of that beauty.

True beauty is hidden beauty; it is beyond understanding, and it is safeguarded from profanation. However, in the same time as it is hidden, it is also revealed, but only to minds that are capable of grasping it, and when it shows, it shows in appropriate images:

They reveal themselves solely to minds capable of grasping them. They shine within our souls only by way of appropriate images (εἰκόνας), images which, like themselves, have the virtue of being incorruptible. Hence virtuous conformity to God (θεοειδοῦς ἀρετῆς) can only appear as an authentic image (ἄγαλμα) of its object when it rivets its attention on that conceptual and fragrant beauty (νοητὸν καὶ εὐῶδες κάλλος). On this condition – and only on this condition – can the soul impress itself and reproduce within itself an imitation of loveliness (κάλλιστον μίμημα).⁵¹

Three important things are to be noted here. First, the hidden, transcendent beauty is always revealed in appropriate images.⁵² Second, even those revealed images cannot be grasped by everyone, but only by those capable of doing so. Thirdly, the only way that the soul can imitate the divine beauty is to constantly look up at the archetype,⁵³ at the transcendent beauty. This concentration enables sacred men to produce the likeness of God, and in doing so they “never cease to shape the power of their minds along the lines of a loveliness which is conceptual, transcendent and fragrant (ὑπερουσίως εὐῶδη καὶ νοητὴ εὐπρέπειαν).”⁵⁴ This capability seems to be not only ontological, but also ethical – it is not “just” an imitation of God, but it is the “virtuous conformity to God” (θεοειδοῦς ἀρετῆς). Therefore, beauty is closely bound to virtue as well, so that being virtuous is a prerequisite of being similar to God and of reflecting his beauty.⁵⁵ Transcendent beauty is something to which humans need to be lifted up in order to attain the conformity to God. The conformity to God is itself beautiful and it is the goal of true human aspiration. That is why the human hierarchy has rejected all disorder, disharmony, and confusion, and has accepted the contrary – order, harmony, and proportion. These three qualities bring about the assimilation to God as hierarchy’s ultimate end. So, for example, in the clerical consecration, the mind of the initiate is made sacred since it received the call from God, and “it has been lifted up to a beauty which brings it into full conformity with God.”⁵⁶ This puts it in the company of like minds, of the same order, and so the kiss between the clerics, as part of the rite, is appropriate because “it denotes the sacred communion (ιεράν κοινωνίαν) formed by like minds and the joyous shared love which ensures for the whole hierarchy the beauty of its conformity to God (θεοειδέστατον κάλλος).”⁵⁷ Beauty, then, allows the conformity to God, and it causes the minds uplifted to it to be in sacred communion, in which they are all connected by mutual love. It is clear here how beauty interacts with the ἔρως κοινωνικός.⁵⁸

At the very end of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Dionysius exclaims the hope that his work will be a useful guide on the path of attaining the divine beauty, which brings one as close as possible to God:

And I believe that more stunning and more divine beauties (τηλαυγέστερα κάλλη καὶ θεϊότερα) will enlighten you too as you employ my remarks as steps up to a more sublime ray. Dear friend, be generous with me. Bring before my eyes that more perfect and more evident enlightenment which

will be yours as you learn of a beauty more lovely and closer to the One (εὐπρεπέστερα κάλλη καὶ ἐνοειδέστερα). For I feel sure that my words will rekindle the sparks of God's fire (θείου πυρὸς) which sleep in you.⁵⁹

What Dionysius leaves us with is not just his intention as to what end this treatise should be used, but it is also the idea, full of hope and optimism, that there is a spark of God's fire sleeping in all of us, a spark that can lead us to the transcendent beauty and to the proximity to God. This idea is reflected in the entire Byzantine aesthetic endeavors, which testify an accentuated transcendence in all the artistic and cultural production. The material splendor and magnificence, especially in the Church, was used to circulate mystical ideas and to represent the path to God in an aesthetic manner.⁶⁰

In summarizing our discussion, it should be pointed out that Dionysius is not concerned with a poetic or artistic conception of beauty, but the focus of his interest is the absolute beauty, beauty in itself. Such beauty can be properly applied only to God, who is the transcendent beauty and the source of beauty in all sensible and intelligible things. Since all things tend to return to their source, as effects return to their cause, so beauty as a divine name denotes also an attractive power by which God draws all creatures to itself. Therefore, God as beauty is the source of beauty in things, the end of their movement, and the object of their erotic desire. On the level of creation, all things are beautiful in proportion to their participation in Beauty. Being created in the beautiful image of God, man reflects this beauty as a composite being, in both soul and body, which leads Dionysius to adopt a positive view of matter and body. One of the examples, in which the appreciation of the world and of the body in terms of worshipping the Creator found its expression, is the iconoclast controversy – the influence, both explicit and implicit, of thinkers such as Dionysius is evident in the doctrines of the iconophile party. Just as illustration of this point, I quote here a passage by John Damascene:

I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation, and I will not cease from reverencing matter, through which my salvation was worked.⁶¹

This apparently bold statement on matter as the vehicle of salvation can be properly understood only if bearing in mind the tradition to which Damascene belonged. It corrects the idea of the body as a prison of the soul or of the visible world as a worthless copy of the celestial one, and it heavily relies on the ideas, which we are able to see in Dionysius. In fact, Dionysius' writings provided a powerful tool in the hands of iconophile theologians who grounded their defense of icons on the understanding of material things as vehicles towards the immaterial.⁶² Similar physical manifestations of the Dionysian legacy can be seen in the religious architecture throughout, not just in the Byzantine sphere of influence, but in Western Europe as well, the cathedral of Chartres and of Saint-Denis, being among the most famous examples.⁶³

Finally, the participated beauty is reflected not only in living things but also in the entire cosmos, composed of both human and angelic hierarchies, whose main characteristics are good order, proper arrangement, symmetry, and right disposition. All these attributes are in fact what Dionysius considers to be the chief marks of cosmic beauty. In this way our author elaborates aesthetic ontology and cosmology, which are reflected not only in God or in individual beings, but also in the relation between God and creation, and among beings present in the cosmos. The comprehension of such beauty incites contemplative and ethical, virtuous activities, which bring about recognition of God as the cause of all beauty and incite the creature to go beyond appearances in order to be uplifted to the ineffable God as source and end of everything. This highly aestheticized understanding of God, world, and man emphasizes the idea that the creation is indeed beautiful, but it is also just a glimpse of a higher transcendent beauty, a beauty that is absolute in a heavenly world which is man's true homeland. Dionysius himself testifies to this optimism in his own words that there is nothing without a share of the Beautiful and the Good.⁶⁴

Notes

- 1 CH III.1, 164D.
- 2 CH III.2, 165A.
- 3 CH III.1, 164D.
- 4 The content of the hierarchy is knowledge, which is passed on through different ranks. To receive knowledge is to be illumined, enlightened. The connection between hierarchy and light or splendor is a central motif here: "Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself. It ensures that when its members have received this full and divine splendor they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale" (CH III.2, 165A). See also "By itself it [the Good] generously reveals a firm, transcendent beam, granting enlightenments proportionate to each being, and thereby draws sacred minds upward to its permitted contemplation, to participation and to the state of becoming like it" (DN I.2, 588CD).
- 5 Viktor Bychkov, "Na podstupah k esteticheskomu soznaniyu avtora 'Areopagitik.'" *Vestnik slavyanskikh kultur* 17, no. 3 (2010), 5–21, esp. 16.
- 6 CH III.2, 165B.
- 7 CH I.3, 121D.
- 8 CH I.3, 124A.
- 9 Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in Eastern Christian Tradition* (Thessaloniki: PIPM, 1994), 127.
- 10 CH II.1, 137B.
- 11 Ep. IX.1, 1105C.
- 12 On beauty as a divine name and on the Good and Beautiful, see Filip Ivanović, "The Eternally and Uniquely Beautiful: Dionysius the Areopagite's Understanding of the Divine Beauty." *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 75, no. 3 (2014), 188–204.
- 13 DN V.3, 817B.
- 14 CH VII.2, 208BC.
- 15 Sara Klitenic-Wear and John M. Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 127.

- 16 CH VII.4, 212A.
- 17 CH VIII.2, 240D.
- 18 CH VIII.2, 241C.
- 19 Symmetry is not to be taken as identical to beauty – it is an effect of beauty, one of its characteristics or outcomes, and not its cause or its equivalent. The same can be said for Plotinus as well. See John P. Anton, “Plotinus’s Refutation of Beauty as Symmetry.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23, no. 2 (1964), 233–237.
- 20 Symmetry and harmony have both an aesthetic and an ontological value. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. II. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 172: “The apportionment of divine grace is not a matter of reward, but of symmetry and harmony between the giver and the receiver, whereby the being and nature of the receiver is always already grounded in the allotted grace, and God primarily crowns his own gift, while correct (symmetrical) human behaviour is taken up into this divinely established harmony secondarily and as a response to God’s giving.”
- 21 F. ex. CH VIII.1, 240AB; CH VIII.2, 241C; CH X.1, 273A; René Roques, *L’univers dionysien* (Paris: Aubier, 1954), 57; Caroline C. Putnam, *Beauty in the Pseudo-Denis* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1960), 75.
- 22 DN VIII.7, 893D–896A.
- 23 Putnam, *Beauty*, 77–78.
- 24 EH I.1, 369.
- 25 EH I.1, 372AB.
- 26 See also DN IV.7, 701C–704A.
- 27 EH I.2, 373A.
- 28 EH IV.3.2, 476B.
- 29 Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 166.
- 30 EH III.3.11, 441B.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Plotinus too calls Beauty formless Form: “Bring something under Form and present it so before the mind; immediately we ask what Beyond imposed that shape (. . .) Shape and idea and measure will always be beautiful, but the Authentic Beauty and the Beyond-Beauty cannot be under measure and therefore cannot have admitted shape or be Idea: the primal existent, The First, must be without Form” [Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, Stephen MacKenna, trans. (Chicago: Harvard University Press, 1958), henceforth Plot., *Enn.*, VI.7.33].
- 33 DN VII.2, 868BC.
- 34 Specifically on this, see Alexander Golitzin, “‘On the Other Hand’: A Response to Fr Paul Wesche’s Recent Article on Dionysius in *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990), 305–329.
- 35 EH VII.1.2, 553CD.
- 36 DN IV.27, 728D.
- 37 See also Putnam, *Beauty*, 56.
- 38 DN XIII.3, 980B.
- 39 Plot., *Enn.*, I.6.2.
- 40 Ibid., V.8.8.
- 41 Ibid., I.6.8.
- 42 Ibid., I.6.2.
- 43 Ibid., I.8.
- 44 See Jan Opsomer, “Proclus vs Plotinus on Matter.” *Phronesis: A Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 46, no. 2 (2001), 154–188.
- 45 Josef Stiglmayr, “Der Neuplatoniker Proklos als Vorlage des sog. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre von Übel.” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895), 253–273; 721–748.
- 46 Plot., *Enn.*, I.6.1. Plotinus will later on identify the essence of beauty not in Form, but in Life, so that even the disproportionate living beings have more beauty than the

- symmetrical lifeless objects (*Enn.*, VI.7.22). By arguing that it is with the radiance (of life) of the Intelligible world, rather than with Form, that beauty should be identified, Plotinus declares that beauty is formless, thus “breaking completely with traditional Platonism” [Richard T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*. Foreword and Bibliography by Lloyd P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 87]. See also Arthur H. Armstrong, “Beauty and the Discovery of Divinity in the Thought of Plotinus.” In *Kephalion: Studies in Greek Philosophy and Its Continuation Offered to Professor C. J. de Vogel*. Jaap Mansfeld and Lambertus M. de Rijk, eds. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 155–163, esp. 161–162.
- 47 PG 44, 1197B, cit. in Putnam, *Beauty*, 61.
- 48 See note 36.
- 49 DN IV.7, 704A.
- 50 DN VII.3, 872B.
- 51 EH IV.3.1, 473B.
- 52 See also chapters by Lidova, Carile, Marsengill, Milanović, and Dennis in this volume.
- 53 Dionysius here uses an artist as example – he always keeps eye on the original and does not allow anything else to distract him (EH IV.3.1, 473C).
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 The idea of virtuous life as the goal of the insight into beauty itself is found in Plato’s *Symposium*, where Diotima’s argument concludes that the ultimate goal of grasping beauty itself is to live through virtue (ἀρετή), so that the real end of insight into beauty is not “images of virtue but true virtue” [Plato, *The Symposium of Plato*. R. G. Bury, ed. (Cambridge: Heffer and Sons, 1909), *Symp.*, 212A]. See also Drew A. Hyland, *Plato and the Question of Beauty* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 112–113.
- 56 EH V.3.6, 513B.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 In DN IV.10, 708AB. Dionysius writes: “Because of it and for its sake, subordinate is returned to superior (ἐπιστρεπτικῶς), equal keeps company with equal (κοινωνικῶς), superior turns providentially to subordinate (προνοητικῶς), each bestirs itself (συνεκτικῶς) and all are stirred to do and to will whatever it is they do and will because of the yearning for the Beautiful and the Good. And we may be so bold as to claim also that the Cause of all things loves all things in the superabundance of his goodness, that because of this goodness he makes all things brings all things to perfection, holds all things together, returns all things. The divine longing (ὁ θεῖος ἔρως) is Good seeking good for the sake of the Good.”
- 59 EH VII.3.11, 568D–569A.
- 60 Wladislaw Tatarkiewicz, *Medieval Aesthetics. History of Aesthetics*, vol. 2 (London: Continuum, 2006), 36.
- 61 John of Damascus, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos III: Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*. P. Bonafatius Kötter, ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975), *Oratio*, I.16.
- 62 On Dionysius’ influence on the iconophile doctrine, see Filip Ivanović, *Symbol and Icon: Dionysius the Areopagite and the Iconoclastic Crisis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010). On Maximus the Confessor’s influence, with a somewhat underestimating approach to Dionysius, see Viktor M. Zhivov, “The Mystagogia of Maximus the Confessor and the Development of the Byzantine Theory of the Image.” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 31 (1987), 349–376. On material things as a kind of “spatial icons” that functioned as vehicles towards the immaterial, see also chapters by Milanović, Dennis, Belgin-Henry, and Bogdanović in this volume.
- 63 See a detailed discussion in Jelena Bogdanović, “Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy in Medieval Architecture: East and West.” In *Dionysius the Areopagite between Orthodoxy and Heresy*. Filip Ivanović, ed. (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 109–134, esp. 122ff.
- 64 DN IV.7, 704B.



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Part II

The sacred made palpable



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2 Monumental icons and their bodies in early Christian Rome and Byzantium

Maria Lidova

The creation of monumental icons is an important and relatively understudied phenomenon of Byzantine artistic culture. The term describing this phenomenon is not well-defined and in a few publications addressing the topic these kinds of images are referred to as “frescoed,” “wall” (wandikonnen),¹ “mural,” or “macro-” icons,² and in some particular cases even as “enfrescoed retables.”³ However, the technical aspects of the surviving examples are not limited to painting since monumental icons – an alternative term proposed here – could be made of mosaics, stone, and other materials.

The notion of “icon” adds to the problem of the name because the original Greek word “eikon” primarily meant “image” and textual sources provide a great variety of contexts in which this word could be used.⁴ In essence, in Byzantium it could stand for any visual rendering of Christian, secular, or even pagan subjects.⁵ It was only at the turn of the twentieth century that, under the influence of Russian art-historical scholarship, the term became internationally accepted and used in specialized literature in its more narrow sense, meaning representations of saints and religious scenes executed on wooden panels, transportable and subject to particular devotion (kissing, touching, adornment, and gift-giving).⁶ Due to this association with works that were traditionally seen as objects of great worship, the notion itself acquired very strong Christian connotations and primary associations with the Eastern Christian world.

The study of monumental icons and their division into separate categories is further complicated by the traditional differentiation that art history tends to make between stationary and transportable artworks, a typological specificity developed in connection with modern art and not highly suited to medieval artistic thinking. In contemporary scholarship, different media in medieval painting are distinguished by the notions of “mural,” used to define images created directly on the wall, and “panel painting.”⁷ The idea of an icon is regularly restricted to the latter category.⁸ However, this division becomes rather evanescent if the visual or anthropological characteristics of medieval images are considered.

The interrelationship between technique and typology was not always respected and many of the examples discussed in this chapter fall outside the standard typological grid due to their technique, function, or pictorial rendering. Portable devotional images could have easily been made of heavy materials that

were not necessarily suitable for movable objects, while a number of fixed representations were at times discordant with the rest of the decoration or the general setting of the ecclesiastical space. This was often connected to the fact that certain images on the wall acquired an individual religious meaning, and with it spatial and visual independence from the surrounding murals. Interestingly enough, the worship granted to these representations was not always determined by the initial conception, and the cult of certain images often began spontaneously as a result of historical events or miraculous manifestations associated with a particular artwork. In other cases, however, it is quite evident that cult images were intentionally introduced within the decoration of a church and were expected from the very outset to accomplish a particular religious function. It is these images that this chapter is primarily concerned with. Hence, the following pages explore instances in which an icon was intentionally created inside a given church decoration, losing the mobility characteristic of similar images on wood but retaining most of the features commonly associated with panel painting, such as composed pictorial rendering, a specific liturgical role, and particular devotional importance for private prayer.

Before moving on to concrete examples it should be said that the apparent metamorphosis of form and function in the case of monumental icons is purely ephemeral and is more connected to our methodological constraints than to the life of medieval artworks. Moreover, it is strictly related to the question of body discussed in this volume, with which it engages at several levels. First of all, it is necessary to understand the relationship between transportable images created on wood and their direct counterparts executed on the surface of a wall. Was the materiality of an object maintained or dissolved once it was reproduced, or better (re)created in another medium with the image acquiring quite distinct physicality? In other words, did monumental icons maintain the association with panels and create an illusion of the bodily presence of the image on wood? Was this “presence”/“absence” of a presumed body acknowledged by the viewer standing and praying at the wall representation?⁹ Finally, was there a game of visual ambiguity that used the pseudo-materiality of the painted image intentionally to indicate its three-dimensional physicality opening it up to greater tactile and visual contact, thus virtually transforming the section of the wall into an “object” in its own right? To put it more simply, the crucial question is whether the monumental icons were actually perceived by the viewer as independent “bodies” within the church space and its decoration.

The second aspect of this question is connected to the figure of the viewer or worshipper. How did the greater religious significance of a given fresco or mosaic determine the new form of interaction between the onlooker and the image? Monumental icons must have engaged a set of emotional and physical reactions provoked by or associated with cult images.¹⁰ The anthropology of human behavior before the monumental icons must have changed in relation to other church decoration present nearby.

It is well known that the interiors of medieval churches were divided into different sacred zones forming a complicated map of an artificially recreated

universal Christian cosmos on Earth.¹¹ As a result, different compartments of the ecclesiastical space acquired various degrees of sacredness, predetermining the range of imagery that was appropriate for a given architectural environment. The appearance of the monumental icons inevitably changed the dynamics of this relationship. They immediately assumed focal significance and created a highly individual connection with the person of the viewer. As the objects of prayer, monumental icons could actively engage the material and physical world around them. Various physical substances, relics, gifts, and other signs of veneration were necessary attributes of this engagement. Finally, the appearance of monumental icons allowed donors to create their own small sacred space within a greater church building (a phenomenon wonderfully exemplified by the private chapels in Rome discussed in this chapter) where those images could become the recipients of special liturgical services and prayer.¹² Monumental icons, although executed within the structural elements of the preexisting church, effectively played the role of “objects,” sacralizing the micro-space and providing it with particular and somewhat individual religious significance, while at the same time visually retaining their quintessential position in a given liturgical setting and decoration.

Wall portraits and monumental cult images in Late Antiquity

Early Byzantine art must have inherited the tradition of singling out a particular representation on a wall from antiquity. Icons on wood themselves are traditionally seen as deriving from ancient forms of paintings. The frontal portrait-like poses of saints together with the use of wax colors allowed scholars to draw strong parallels with Roman funerary portraits, the best examples of which come from the Fayum region in Egypt and belong to the period of the Roman rule over those territories.¹³ According to alternative views, the genesis of Christian icons is to be sought in small wooden panels bearing representations of pagan gods.¹⁴ Although the use of the encaustic technique for these panels is less common than in the funerary portraits, these artifacts are much more in line with the devotional and cult function of Christian icons and their significance in private worship. Finally, in terms of cult and public roles, icons in many ways recall the use of imperial representations known to have been made in sculpture and wall-painting but also executed on wood with wax colors.¹⁵ The latter could be transportable but also permanently fixed onto walls as attested by some late antique sources. Suffice it to remember the famous passage by Eusebius on the encaustic image of Constantine with his sons stabbing a serpent with a weapon, which is said to have been set before the palace entrance in Constantinople.¹⁶ It remains unclear in which medium this wax-colored image was executed, but the monumental grandeur of the scene and its visual significance as an independent composition of imperial victory over the evil enemy and with it of the sacred power of the ruler and his family in their function as the protectors of the state is evident.

A number of ancient texts mention the existence of fixed portraits and religious imagery within private households.¹⁷ It cannot be excluded that pagan tradition was initially appropriated by the Christians who in turn started to decorate the

walls of their houses with images of saints.¹⁸ One such piece of evidence can be found in the sermon pronounced by John Chrysostom in 386 in honor of Saint Meletius, the bishop of Antioch, deceased only five years earlier. In the beginning of the homily John observes the great veneration that people had for Meletius:

You have been so greatly affected not only by his name, but even by his bodily traits. For what you have done with regard to names, you did also with regard to his image. Indeed, many persons have represented that holy image on the bezel of their rings and on their seals and on bowls and on walls of their rooms and in many other places so they might not only hear his holy name, but also see everywhere his physical traits, thus having a double consolation after his demise.¹⁹

The Greek expression “ἐν θαλάμων τοίχοις,” indicating a private environment, is particularly noteworthy in this context. The ability of a painted image to reproduce and evoke the presence of the real physical body of a person is also quite significant;²⁰ it reveals the complex materiality associated with icons and visual reproductions of human likeness at a time when they were reconceived for Christian use.

There is similar testimony of a woman from Laodicea who decorated all the walls in her house with representations of Saints Cosmas and Damian “as she was insatiable in her desire of seeing them.”²¹ The story continues, describing how she was saved from colic by scrubbing the plaster from the mural icon of the saints and drinking it with water. The mention of the mural itself is incidental to the circumstances of the miracle, but it should most probably be seen as reflecting common practice at the time. This account once again reveals the complex materiality connected with sacred images in Late Antiquity when even their substance could acquire autonomous agency.²²

Mural images inside houses could fulfill different functions, serving primarily, as we have seen, as souvenirs and reminders of a particular figure, allowing the formation of a personal connection to somebody who was no longer alive. Many of these representations, however, soon assumed religious significance and started to perform the function of prayer images, serve as potential sources for miraculous intervention, and fulfill the role of *apotropaioi*, protecting the dwelling and its owners from any evil and attacks by enemies. However, the beholder’s personal and religious engagements with such images apparently differed in each particular case.

In the Western world one of the most exciting examples of the practice described earlier can be found in the Porta Marina house in Ostia.²³ The huge villa on the outskirts of the city was lavishly decorated with particular attention given to the adornment of the main reception hall. The construction works were never finished however, and the residence was partially destroyed before the embellishment was completed. Thanks to the Roman coins set into the mortar of the wall and excavated on site, this house and its decoration is reliably dated to the last quarter of the fourth century.²⁴

The reception hall of the house was decorated with the *opus sectile* technique, a form of decoration veneer consisting of stone plaques of different colors matched to create decorative patterns and complex figurative images. A male portrait showing a half-length image of a bearded man within a rectangular frame was placed in the central part of the eastern wall (Figure 2.1). The physiognomic characteristics, such as a dark beard and long curly hair falling behind the shoulders, as well as a circular halo around the head and the solemn gesture of his raised right hand, are easily associated with the representational type that would become standard for subsequent images of Christ.²⁵ Initially identified as such by the archeologists who discovered the monument, this interpretation is currently generally dismissed since we have no any clear indication about potential Christian use of the space or the religious background of the owners of the house.²⁶ However, many specialists point out that at the time the decoration was created the rigid line distinguishing different religious identities in late antique imagery had not yet been clearly drawn. Rulers, philosophers, and various pagan deities could coexist within the house *lararia*, and it was in this multivalent religious context that Christian imagery started to be introduced, initially on a par with other more traditional gods and images of respected patriarchs (be they deceased members of the family, rulers, or ancient philosophers) assuming in most cases very similar forms and functions.²⁷ It is not surprising in this respect that the Porta Marina image is often compared to the *opus sectile* remains of two portraits of Homer and Plato from Kenchreai, although little is known of the intended location and function of



Figure 2.1 Half-length portrait of a bearded man (Christ or philosopher?), Porta Marina house, Ostia, *opus sectile*, late fourth century, National Museum of Early Middle Ages, Rome.

Photo: Maria Lidova.

these representations.²⁸ In his overview of the images of philosophers in antiquity, Zanker rightly observes that in the late Roman period they clearly obtained importance beyond a mere decorative function, acquired somewhat mysterious meanings, and their images were probably intended for particular groups of adepts.²⁹

What is interesting in the case of Porta Marina is that the bust of the bearded male figure has been carefully inserted into the decoration. The repetitive motif of large rectangular panels occupied the lower zone of the wall, and placed just above it and below the uninterrupted frieze featuring an exquisite floral vegetation motif was a tripartite group of rectangles occupied in most cases by a vertically oriented lozenge in the center and two symmetrical pelte-shaped elements at the sides. The image of the bearded man takes the place of one of the rhombs, and specifically the central one in the sequence of five geometrical compartments rhythmically dividing the surface of the right wall. The equivalent decoration on the opposite wall does not feature any portraits and all five corresponding rectangular panels are occupied by a rhomb. This means that the portrait may have been added at the time the *opus sectile* decoration was in the process of execution (well calculated considering the change of color in the background of all three rectangles) and that other parts of the decoration could be substituted by figurative representations, if desired.³⁰

In the lower zone of the same wall, slightly to the left of the bearded male portrait, there was another image of a young man placed within a circular medallion. Who this figure represents and how it relates to the bearded man in the center remains unclear.³¹ But the presence of the two heads on just one side of the room, otherwise filled with ornamental motifs and images of lions and tigers devouring their prey, is somewhat peculiar and particularly noticeable and dissonant if compared with the abstract decoration imitating *opus mixtum* in the central space of the rectangular exedra at the end of the hall. Were these portraits indeed a foreign element intentionally inserted as a result of second thoughts in the process of making this room or later? Or was the asymmetry in the visual logic and the seeming lack of coherence in the program typical for this period and quite in line with the artistic thinking of the craftsmen? Could it be that the placement of not clearly identified portraits specifically on the right wall was predetermined by a particular function of the hall and the intended arrangement of the furniture?

Though the exact character of such interventions cannot be established with certainty it is evident that the *opus sectile* portrait could perform a decorative, apotropaic, commemorative, or purely religious function. Be it as it may, the portraits change the general setting of the room, interfere with the standard symmetry of the decoration, and create self-standing markers within the space. Artworks similar to the *opus sectile* image of Porta Marina in Ostia, to imperial representations made on the walls,³² and to the surviving Roman examples of painted house *lararia*, or mural images mentioned in early Christian sources, could help to trace the origins and formal precedents of the phenomenon that is discussed in this chapter primarily on the basis of the mosaic decoration of John VII's Oratory in Rome.

The Orant Virgin from the Oratory of John VII

The early medieval chapel of John VII (705–707) was constructed in the north-eastern corner of Old St. Peter's opposite the central altar and adjoining the façade wall in the far right lateral aisle.³³ It was destroyed at the beginning of the seventeenth century when the last surviving part of the Constantinian basilica was demolished by order of Pope Paul V (1605–1621) and replaced by the new Baroque façade designed by Carlo Maderno.³⁴ All that remains today of the early medieval chapel of the Virgin are multiple dismantled elements of the mosaic and sculptural decoration.³⁵ However, drawings and watercolors made on the eve of the demolition in combination with a detailed description of this part of the basilica by the Vatican archivist Giacomo Grimaldi (1568–1623) allow us to develop a clear idea of the original setting of the early medieval chapel (Figure 2.2).³⁶

Besides Grimaldi, the Oratory also features in Tiberio Alfarano's plan of Old St. Peter's created at the end of the sixteenth century, which provides a better understanding of the exact location of the chapel and its spatial relationship to other structures once located in this part of the church.³⁷ In the captions accompanying the plan the chapel is marked under number 114 and defined as *Altare olim Oratorij S. Mariae a Io[annis] VII. Nunc Porta Santa*. The name refers to



Figure 2.2 Oratory of John VII, Old St. Peter's, Rome. Three-dimensional reconstruction of the Oratory of John VII (706) made by M. Carpićeci and G. Dibenedetto, with A. Ballardini and P. Pogliani.

Drawing: Courtesy Antonella Ballardini and Paola Pogliani.

the Holy Door, or the sacred entrance, granting pilgrims the remission of sins, installed at the site of the Oratory in 1475 by Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484). This element must have significantly changed the original commemorative and funerary function of the early medieval chapel. The new door permitted passage right through the former space of the Oratory, apparently making partial use of its structures. The newly opened path brought worshippers entering the church into immediate and direct visual contact with the ciborium of Veronica – the famous relic with the miraculously imprinted face of Christ – which was hidden behind the grid overlooking the entrance wall. The ciborium was especially constructed here at the end of the twelfth century and positioned slightly to the left of the central axis of the aisle, but it was strongly believed, at least in the early seventeenth century, that the most precious relic of the *acheipoiotos* image of Christ had previously been kept in the Oratory itself.

The caption on Alfaro's plan also mentions the association of the Oratory space with the Nativity by calling it *ad Presepe*,³⁸ a traditional appendix attested in the titles of other early Marian churches of the city and usually thought to indicate the presence of particular relics connected to Bethlehem events or possibly to Mary herself.³⁹

According to seventeenth-century drawings of Grimaldi's codices, the altar of the Oratory was initially placed in front of the wall in a space limited by two twisted vine scroll columns that supported a small semi-circular vault.⁴⁰ The frontal side of the arched vault was decorated with an emphatic inscription *DOMUS SANCTAE DEI GENETRICIS MARIAE* characterizing the chapel as the dwelling of the Mother of God.⁴¹ The most impressive element of the early medieval decoration was an enormous mosaic panel placed above the altar, right on the counter-façade wall and overlooking the northern aisle (Figure 2.3). It was situated high above the hypothetical walls of the Oratory and would have been seen by worshippers from a distance. Six meters high and 9 meters long, it covered a large area almost up to the ceiling with a detailed program, realized in precious mosaic technique. The heart of this program was dedicated to the figure of the Mother of God represented standing on a pedestal with both of her hands raised upwards in a traditional gesture of intense prayer, known as *in orans*.⁴² The most outstanding feature of the representation of the *Theotokos* was its iconography. Mary was portrayed wearing rich purple imperial garments adorned by a precious collar around her neck and a jeweled girdle, as well as a sumptuous crown with pearl *pendilia*, elements that underscore the typical features of *Maria Regina* representations popular in early medieval Rome.⁴³

Luckily this central fragment still survives today (Figure 2.4). The figure of the Virgin, about 2.7 meters tall, was detached from the wall in 1609 and sent to Florence as a gift for the bishop of Arezzo, who placed it above the family altar in the Ricci Chapel of the Basilica di San Marco in Florence. At this stage the mosaic most probably underwent a number of interventions. The raised hands, most of the golden background, and a horizontal band in the middle of the Virgin's figure belong to the later restoration of the image. Notwithstanding these modifications, a significant part of the fragment is original and dates back to when the



Figure 2.3 The Virgin orans and Christological cycle, Oratory of John VII, from Old St. Peter's, Rome, mosaic. Reproduction of a seventeenth-century drawing made on the eve of demolition (B.A.V. Barb. lat. 2733), 89v, Vatican library.

From: Raffaele Garrucci, *Storia dell'arte cristiana nei primi otto secoli della chiesa*, 6 vols. (Prato: G. Guasti, 1872–1881), vol. 4, Tav. 279.

Oratory was created in the early eighth century. In order to fit the space reserved for the altar image in the Ricci chapel the figure of the Virgin was surrounded by painted decoration reproducing mosaic technique. The seventeenth-century supplement depicted two saints, St. Dominic and St. Raymond,⁴⁴ at the sides and cherubim holding an open cartouche with the inscription “Mater Misericordia” at the top, above Mary’s head.⁴⁵

In the original setting, however, to the left of the Virgin, the figure of the founder of the Oratory – Pope John VII (705–707) – could be seen. The upper part of his body is still preserved in the Vatican grottoes and, though it was significantly modified in subsequent centuries, it gives a rough idea of the original portrait. On a smaller scale, he was depicted offering the Heavenly Queen the Oratory building with covered hands. Dressed in traditional papal attire, he had a square nimbus around his head, an element often considered by scholars as an indication of the lifetime portraits of the donor in early medieval Rome.⁴⁶

The composition with Mary and John VII was accompanied by several monumental inscriptions. Generally, the use of epigraphy in the Oratory of John VII was very extensive. It included several captions with the names of represented figures; citation from the Gospel of St. Luke in the Annunciation scene (the first known occurrence of Latin *Ave* in art);⁴⁷ carved texts on marble, including an epitaph, and some added to the chapel later; and finally, two phrases flanking the



Figure 2.4 Maria Regina, central image from the Oratory of John VII, from Old St. Peter's, Rome, surrounded by seventeenth-century painting, imitating the mosaic technique and representing two Dominican saints (St. Dominic and St. Raymond), Ricci chapel, San Marco basilica, Florence.

Photo: Maria Lidova.

image of the Orant Virgin with the pope. As the drawings demonstrate, it was a simple titular formula, one part of which was on a horizontal band underneath both figures and stated *IOHANNES INDIGNUS EPISCOPUS FECIT*, attributing the creation of the Oratory to the unworthy Bishop John. The other part ran vertically down the right side and defined the pope as *BEATAE DEI GENETRICIS SERVUS*, i.e., the servant of the Blessed Mother of God. Besides stating the patronage and dedication, the two parts of the text must have worked as captions since the name of the pope was placed in proximity to his figure to the left of the Virgin, while the vertical line opening with the indication of the Mother of God flanked her image on the right.

Seven elongated, horizontal panels surrounded the central donor composition like a frame from the top to the bottom of both sides and were arranged in three consecutive rows. The story unfolding in these representations consisted of fifteen scenes from the life of Christ. Their distribution followed a narrative logic with the beginning of the Gospel story and scenes connected to the Infancy of Christ (the *Annunciation* combined with the *Visitation*, the *Nativity* and the *Adoration of the Magi*) placed on the top row. The *Nativity* composition was located directly above the figure of the Orant *Theotokos* on the central vertical axis of the decoration. In the lower register the cycle continued with two compositions, dedicated on one side to the divine revelations made during the *Presentation* and *Baptism* and, on the other, to the *Miracles of Christ*. Finally, the narrative culminated in the Passion cycle in the bottom zone, starting with the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, the *Entrance to Jerusalem* and the *Last Supper* brought together in the left scene, and the *Crucifixion* with the *Women at the tomb* and the *Harrowing of Hell* appearing on the right.

Little remains of early Byzantine Constantinopolitan art to help us judge how characteristic of chapels was the kind of decoration encountered in the Oratory of John VII. However, the principle of arranging detailed narrative compositions around a central image, with one of the protagonists of the story visually holding the program together, was widely used in another kind of early Byzantine artwork – the ivory five-part diptychs most commonly used as covers for liturgical Gospels (Figure 2.5).⁴⁸ The artistic treatment of the central panels presupposed a frontal arrangement of the figures, usually of Christ or the Virgin, along the central axis. The lateral scenes were often dedicated to *Infancy* or *Miracle* cycles. In a number of cases the upper and lower plaques of the five-part ivory panel were also occupied by scenes taken from the Gospels, Old Testament or featuring the victorious motif with a pair of angels holding a wreath. The most characteristic feature of this arrangement consisted of how the central panel interacted with the surrounding compositions. On the one hand, frontal images of Christ and the Mother of God were an integral part of the program but at the same time they were represented as if taken out of the holy narrative, acquiring an independent semantic or symbolic meaning. They moved to an iconic level abandoning the temporality and identifiable storytelling elements underlying the other representations. Thanks to this formal rendering, focal position and hieratic iconography, these small panels acquired the role of micro-icons on which the eyes of worshippers and priests concentrated at different moments of the liturgy when the codex decorated with its ivory cover was either shown to the congregation, exposed for veneration at the center of the church, or placed on the altar.

Like the ivory diptychs, the central image of *Maria Regina* was singled out within the general decoration of John VII's Oratory. Due to its size, formal treatment, unusual iconography, and the solemnity of the imperial attire, the figure of Mary dominated the whole decoration. What distinguishes the Roman program is that the central image was surrounded by accompanying compositions only around three sides, but the general principle in the visual arrangement of narrative and non-narrative scenes is similar to five-part ivories and may reflect a specific artistic solution applied to artworks of different media in the Early Byzantine period.

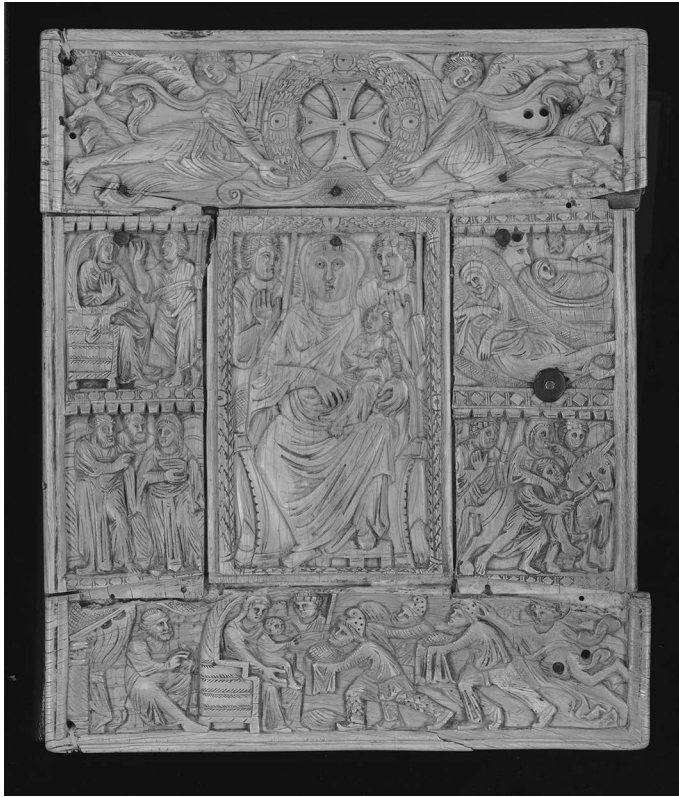


Figure 2.5 Virgin enthroned with Christ Child and narrative scenes, five-part ivory cover of Etchmiadzin Gospels, Matenadaran Institute Library (Ms. 2374), sixth century, Yerevan, Armenia.

Photo: © “Matenadaran” Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts.

The emphasis on the figure of the Mother of God in the Oratory mosaics was predetermined by the particular devotion that John VII demonstrated towards the Virgin in all his artistic enterprises, above all the new fresco decoration in the church of S. Maria Antiqua in the Roman Forum and the mosaics in the Oratory in Old St. Peter's.⁴⁹ In both cases the consecration, accompanying inscriptions, and decoration were specifically linked to the Mother of God. Most importantly, by founding his Oratory, John VII not only created a personal burial chapel but also established the earliest liturgical space specifically dedicated to Mary in the apostolic basilica.

Such consistent promulgation of the figure of the Mother of God, leaving aside personal reasons and choices, must have been inspired by various impulses and changes in the veneration of the Virgin connected among other things to the

introduction of the fixed Marian feasts by Pope Sergius I (687–701) a few years earlier. It is not surprising therefore that Deshman considers the Oratory program as one of the earliest expressions of the idea of servitude in honor of the Mother of God in Western art.⁵⁰

Indirect evidence exists for the presence of relics of the Virgin in the Oratory – for instance a medieval inscription bearing the date 783, which, according to Ballardini, may have formed part of the *fenestella confessionis* of the altar in the chapel.⁵¹ It contains numerous Marian epithets and a reference to the Sancta Sanctorum. The formula *sub tegmine matris*, translated by Ballardini as “protection of the Holy Mother” can be read in different ways, and Ballardini interestingly observes that it could refer to the *maphorion* or, more generally, an element of the Virgin’s garment.⁵² Today we cannot establish with certainty which relic was once preserved in the Oratory, nor is it clear when the place became associated with the image of Veronica,⁵³ but the *fulcrum* of devotion may have been the mosaic image of the Orant Virgin itself, independently of any other material relics preserved within the chapel.

When discussing the donor composition of John VII in her thesis, Ann van Dijk compares it to the decoration of apse niches and more generally to the Roman tradition of donor compositions often present in the curved space of the apse.⁵⁴ In this chapter, however, I will try to demonstrate a different point and suggest that in its original setting and long before it acquired the role of the altar painting in the Ricci Chapel in Florence, the image of the Virgin Orant possessed specific characteristics such that it was perceived and most probably venerated as a monumental icon.

Grimaldi mentions two 3-meter columns of black oriental marble spatially framing the central composition with the figure of the *Theotokos*. The unusual color underscored the precious material of the mosaic and must have created a spectacular contrast with the rest of the decoration in which gold prevailed. Some drawings clearly show sharp points on the top of the columns and hooks on their sides, indicating that they may have been used as giant candlesticks and simultaneously served as drapery hangers.⁵⁵ This is confirmed by Grimaldi who mentions that from time to time the image of the Virgin was hidden behind a curtain hanging from a pole attached to projections of the column capitals.⁵⁶ The approximate height of the columns was around 3.35 meters,⁵⁷ which according to Nordhagen could mean that the candles placed on top would reach the level of the composition with the *Nativity* above and literally highlight it within the program.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, the exact function of this arrangement and the precise time of its appearance before the figure of the Virgin remain unknown, but nevertheless it serves as clear proof that at some point, and possibly from the very beginning, the image of the Orant was perceived as an independent icon and an object of great devotion.

The tradition of veiling devotional images was well-known and widespread in the East and West alike throughout the Middle Ages, though in an overwhelming majority of instances researchers come across veils and suspended draperies in connection with worshipped iconic images produced on wood or in stone. It is known that textiles were widely used in Rome and were often donated by popes

to different Roman basilicas, including Old St. Peter's.⁵⁹ In some cases it can even be deduced from sources that these donations were made for the venerated images of the Virgin.

The conventionalized spatial correlations in seventeenth-century drawings do not allow the precise arrangement of the columns and textiles in front of the mosaic icon to be recreated. As suggested by Ballardini, the central composition is quite likely to have been enclosed within a rectangular niche and thus spatially separated from the rest of the program.⁶⁰ One can speculate on the possible use of this arrangement during the liturgical services and the various theatrical effects of hiding and revealing the central image of the Mother of God as well as alterations in the level of attention given to the narrative Christological cycle.

The mosaic image of *Maria Regina* has often been regarded in connection with another Roman image – the famous icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere (Figure 2.6).⁶¹ The difference between the iconographic types (Mary enthroned

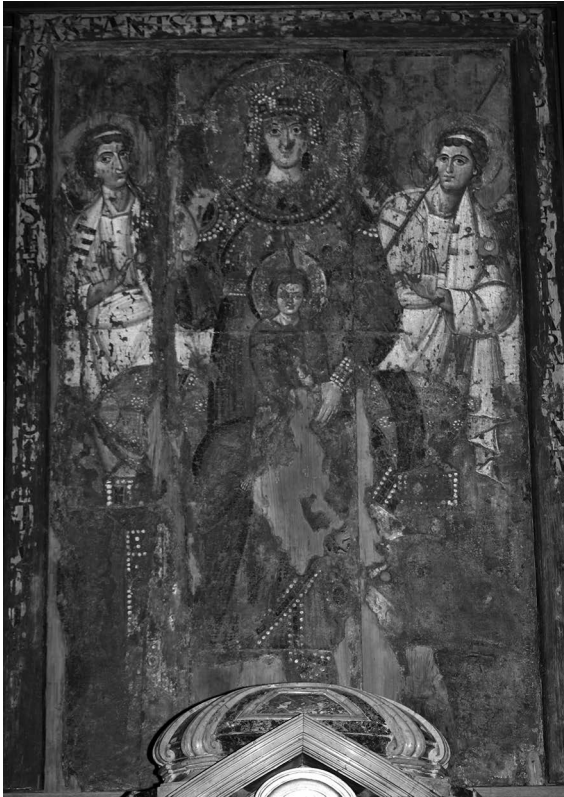


Figure 2.6 Icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere, encaustic, late sixth to early eighth century, Altemps chapel, Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome.

Photo: Maria Lidova.

with Child and the Orant standing alone) becomes less relevant if one notices the almost absolute equivalence of the imperial attire: the same purple dalmatic, *maniakion* (the jeweled collar around the neck), medallions on the shoulders, and lavishly adorned crown. Moreover, the face of the Orant Virgin is very similar to the encaustic rendering of the image of the *Theotokos* on the icon. The two images of *Maria Regina* are certainly interlinked and it is possible that one reproduces the other, though an individual approach to the artistic and iconographic treatment is retained in each case. Scholars have offered varying opinions on which of the two Marias was the original image. In my view, it is more likely that the Trastevere icon, considered at the time to be a miraculous *acheiropoietos* (not made by human hands) image, served as a prototype for the Orant Virgin in the Vatican chapel. The appearance of this “replica” in the decoration of the Oratory may have been meant to link the mosaic image with the miraculous icon, and thus establish symbolic and spatial connections between the two within the sacred topography of the city. As a consequence, the mosaic Orant inevitably acquired features that contributed to its perception as an alternative iconic representation and an object of veneration.

The iconography of the Orant Virgin and the use of the covering veil bring to mind another miracle-working icon of Byzantium, that of the Blachernae church in Constantinople.⁶² As is known from later sources and reproductions on seals, the famous icon represented the Virgin with her hands raised in the pose of an Orant while the veil played an essential role in the weekly miracle performed by the Blachernitissa before the congregation and guests of the capital.⁶³ It is unfortunate that early written sources and, more importantly, the icon itself, have not survived, making it impossible to reconstruct the iconography of the image and forms of worship in the early eighth century, when the Roman Oratory was created.

It should be pointed out, however, that the reproduction of miraculous images was not necessarily the only premise for the creation of monumental icons. Individual murals or mosaics could be venerated and emphasized within the church space with the help of additional decorations or votive gifts. Numerous traces of nails and hinges still survive on the surface of several early Byzantine paintings.⁶⁴ Therefore, it can be demonstrated that certain murals were made and arranged within the extensive church decoration as independent iconic images from the very outset. Such pictorial compositions often carried a profound individual devotional message. By far the most spectacular surviving examples of such images can be found in the decoration of S. Maria Antiqua church in Rome.⁶⁵

Monumental icons in S. Maria Antiqua

The so-called Theodotus chapel to the left of the main altar space of S. Maria Antiqua church preserves one important case of the use of a monumental icon. The extensive decoration of this small rectangular space was executed in the middle of the eighth century and was primarily dedicated to the martyrdom of the two early Christian saints, Quiricus and Julitta.⁶⁶ It also included several scenes connected

to the figure of the founder of the chapel and *primicerius* of S. Maria Antiqua – Theodotus, which makes the whole program a highly individualized project. The frescoes on the wall behind the altar consisted of three registers (Figure 2.7). The lower part reproduced textile hangings in painting. In the middle the viewer could see the image of the enthroned Virgin with Christ Child on her lap. At her sides there were six standing figures: Peter and Paul beside the throne, followed by the titular saints of the chapel, Quiricus and Julitta, singled out by the pedestal beneath their feet, and at the ends the donors – Theodotus himself and Pope Zaccharias (742–751), under whose rule the decoration of the chapel was accomplished.

Placed above this group, was a huge composition of the *Crucifixion* (2.29 by 1.89 meters), spatially emphasized by a deep (43-centimeter) rectangular niche within which it is contained (Figure 2.8). The side walls of the niche were decorated with ornamentation at the top and conventional representations of palm trees

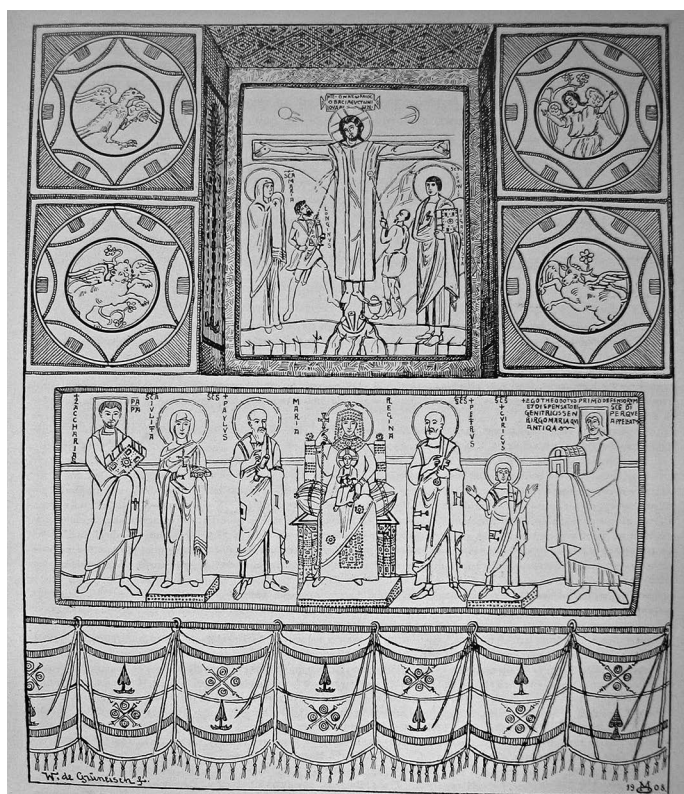


Figure 2.7 The decoration of the altar wall of Sts Quiricus and Julitta (or Theodotus) chapel, Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, middle of the eighth century.

From: Wladimir de Grunewald, *Sainte-Marie-Antique: le caractère et le style des peintures du VIe au XIIIe siècle* (Rome: M. Bretschneider, 1911), 121.



Figure 2.8 *Crucifixion*, monumental icon. Sts Quiricus and Julitta (or Theodotus) chapel, Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, middle of the eighth century.

Photo: Maria Lidova.

set against a white background at the sides, highly decorative and not obviously connected to the image of the crucified Christ in the center. The iconographic solution of the *Crucifixion* focused on the arrangement of the five figures within the rectangular pictorial space of the back wall of the niche. The center was occupied by the image of Christ hanging on the cross and wearing a purple *colobium*. His gaze was directed leftwards, towards the figure of the Virgin standing beneath the cross and bringing her hands covered within the folds of the deep-blue *maphorion* to her face, a traditional sign of grief and despair. To the right of the cross was the figure of the apostle John, represented standing, with a huge jeweled codex in his left hand and in the act of performing a gesture similar to benediction with his right. In between the three protagonists two smaller figures of soldiers were depicted accomplishing symmetrical actions. The one on the left, identified by the caption as Longinus, was shown putting a spear into Christ's ribs and the other one offering Jesus the sponge dipped in vinegar.

The artistic treatment of the *Crucifixion* scene in S. Maria Antiqua has many features that echo the way this subject was represented on contemporary Byzantine panel paintings, as attested by examples from the collection of St. Catherine's monastery at Mount Sinai (Figure 2.9).⁶⁷ In fact, the similarity between the

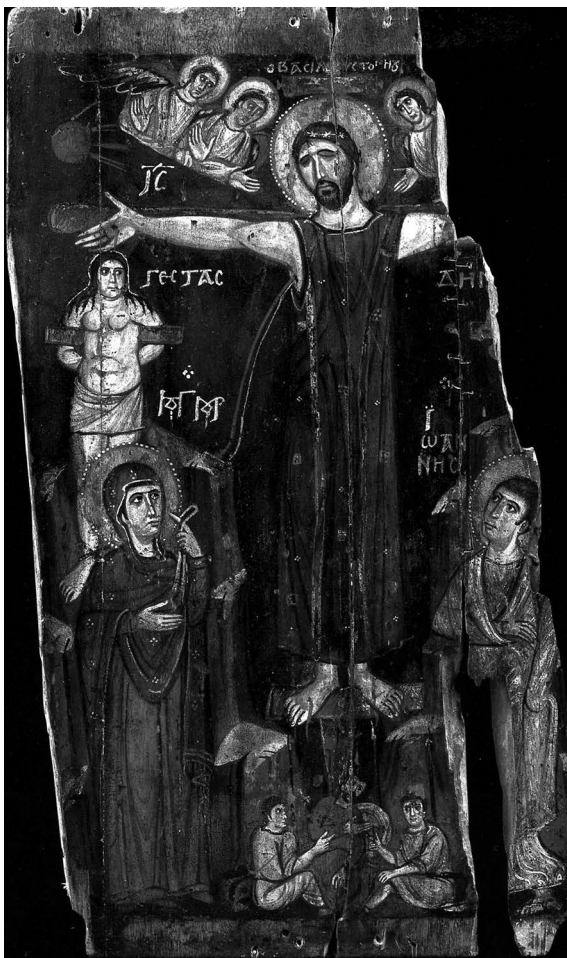


Figure 2.9 *Crucifixion*, icon, eighth century, St. Catherine's monastery, Sinai.

From: *Holy Image. Hallowed Ground. Icons from Sinai*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006; © courtesy St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai).

Crucifixion of S. Maria Antiqua and the Sinai icon is impressive, considering the early date of the artworks and quite different geographical and cultural context that they come from. Of course, one may argue that the images are not identical since Christ is represented with his eyes open in the Roman fresco and with his eyes closed in the Sinai icon and the panel in composition is more complex due to the presence of the two soldiers dividing the clothes of Christ and flying angels above the cross.⁶⁸ However, these differences are minor, if one considers the general rendering of the scene and its principle iconographic elements. Both images

share the *colobium* garment of Christ marked by golden vertical *clavi*, the outline of his crucified body with the head slightly inclined to the left, the placement and general treatment of Mary and John the Evangelist, as well as the presence of the rocky landscape in the background. Such similarities imply links between the two artworks, as well as the possible existence of mutual models and patterns. Therefore, it is the visual language itself that contributes to the perception of the frescoed *Crucifixion* in Rome as a monumental icon.

Another significant example can be seen in the same basilica – a small mural representing the *Theotokos* on the northwest pillar of the church (Figure 2.10).⁶⁹ This monumental icon was originally the central image of a small private chapel. From the decoration of this space only the frescoed niche has survived in a good state of preservation. It contains the image of the Mother of God wearing the purple *maphorion* and gently holding the halo of Child Christ in her right hand. It is usually dated to the beginning of the eighth century and more specifically to the time of Pope John VII, though the dating and the circumstances of the appearance of this image within S. Maria Antiqua remain hypothetical and are based primarily on stylistic considerations. The difference in scale and the unusual format of Christ's image, depicted in bust-like form with only his shoulders visible above the lower edge, emphasize the figure of the Virgin, whose importance is also highlighted by the abbreviated captions in the top corners that read as *Hagia Maria*.

The formal treatment of the image inscribed in a double frame (light yellow with a black outline) brings the mural image close in form and function to icons painted on wood. The small niche (48 by 45 centimeters) not only spatially



Figure 2.10 Mother of God with Christ, mural, monumental icon, northwest pillar, Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, early eighth century.

Photo: Maria Lidova.

emphasized the internal fresco but also provided an additional place for the relics that were immured right beneath it. The sides of the niche were adorned with green stone slabs, a fragment of which still survives today, while a white marble slab was placed on the horizontal surface before the image. At some point this slab was intentionally broken which resulted in the ruinous state of the lower zone of the fresco. The goal of this operation was apparently to obtain the relics once kept beneath the marble panel, more specifically in the hollow space clearly visible today inside the mass of the wall right in front of the image.

Besides this indication of the presence of relics, there are also numerous signs of nails used to fix votive gifts. Particularly interesting is the upper right corner of the niche. Its current state and the fact that the outline of the Marian icon makes a curved turn at this point indicate that from the very beginning it was intended to serve as a place of fixture for a hanging lamp or a similar object appended before the image. All these elements point to a particular devotional significance of the mural which must have been conceived from the start as a cult object since the setting of the marble revetment of the niche, the previously immured relics, and the especially created cavity for the lamp were most probably accomplished either before or in coordination with the painting on the back wall. Proper reconstruction of this endeavor can help to develop a better understanding of how icons were perceived and contextualized in the early Middle Ages, presenting themselves as part of a complex system of artifacts and decorations; a set of functions almost completely obliterated for the majority of religious panel painting that survives in museum collections. The self-standing nature of the Marian fresco is furthermore confirmed by the fact that nearby compositions do not seem to have been compositionally linked to the image in the niche. The general arrangement of the space and the traces of the donor's composition nearby indicate that the whole space was once again a private endeavor and the religious services performed here must have been centered on a small image within the niche. The desire to emphasize monumental icons in a mural decoration with niches, additional décor, votive gifts, or relics is a typological feature of all the images analyzed so far.

S. Maria Antiqua preserves several other examples of the use of fresco representations as individual icons.⁷⁰ The most interesting is the case with the figure of St. Anne in the presbytery of the church which, together with another saint adjacent to it, was preserved during one of the most extensive decoration campaigns in this space by Pope John VII (Figure 2.11). The painters carefully incorporated the earlier fresco into the new murals.⁷¹ Besides its religious significance, also attested by the holes indicating the presence of votive gifts, the mural was preserved because it represented the mother of Mary, to whom the church was dedicated. The task was also facilitated by the fresco's location right at the edge of the wall, in proximity to the archway between the sanctuary and the Chapel of Physicians. This transformation of a fresco representation into a cult image is extremely interesting since the tradition continued throughout the Middle Ages.⁷² However, as has been mentioned, this chapter particularly focuses on cases where the artistic solution and its placement indicate that the murals or mosaics were conceived



Figure 2.11 St. Anne, mural, presbytery, Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, late sixth century.
Photo: Maria Lidova.

from the outset to accomplish a function analogous to that of an icon. The range of monumental icons can easily be enlarged by the inclusion of compositions in the semicircular niches present in Rome and elsewhere.⁷³ Besides the ones represented in S. Maria Antiqua with three mothers (Mary, Elizabeth, and Anne), with Saint Abbacyrus in the atrium,⁷⁴ with the row of saints in the niche in the Chapel of Physicians,⁷⁵ one may cite the one contemporaneous to the Madonna in the niche image of the Virgin in the church of the St. Valentine catacomb on Via Flaminia.⁷⁶ The half-length figure of the Mother of God decorated the curved space (55 by 55 centimeters) in the wall flanking the opening to the cemetery forming part of the extensive decoration made in this entrance chamber.⁷⁷

In his recent article on en frescoed icons, Beat Brenk postulates that this kind of image was primarily characteristic of the West.⁷⁸ This idea is problematic for a number of reasons. First, because of the ambiguity of the cultural milieu in early medieval Rome, which some art historians, including the author of this chapter, believe was very much linked in the early medieval period to the Byzantine world, providing precious material evidence for the kind of artworks that has been forever lost on the Byzantine mainland. Second, it is well known that the tradition of monumental icons continued in Byzantium throughout the centuries and there are numerous post-iconoclastic examples, some placed within niches in the *naos* of the church, others incorporated into the iconostases or decorating the walls of the



Figure 2.12 St. Panteleimon, monumental icon, St. Panteleimon church at Nerezi, Republic of Macedonia, 1164.

Photo: Maria Lidova.

sanctuary. Suffice it to remember the impressive image of the patron saint in the St. Panteleimon church in Nerezi (Figure 2.12) and all subsequent Palaeologan examples flanking the altar doors,⁷⁹ or the famous eleventh-century representation in the niche inside the pillar of the Tokali kilise in Cappadocia, a direct counterpart to the early medieval mural Madonnas of Rome⁸⁰ (Figure 2.13). If taken as an independent artistic phenomenon, a separate study could shed light on how the tradition of monumental icons evolved in Byzantium. Finally, there are purely Eastern examples of monumental cult images from the Early Byzantine period, which indicate that the tradition was widespread and characteristic of Christian art in quite distinct and distant territories.

The absence of surviving images from the central territories of the Byzantine Empire is complemented by those preserved in Egypt. In connection with the *Maria Regina* from John VII's Oratory it seems most appropriate to discuss one particular representation of the Mother of God discovered in house D of Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria (Figure 2.14).⁸¹ Carefully placed in the very center of the south wall of a central courtyard in the structure that served both as a residence and a workshop, this large composition depicted Mary seated on the throne with Child Christ on her lap (1.5 meters), an angel standing on the right and the smaller figure of the donor placed between the two.⁸² The other side of the courtyard was supposedly also decorated with a counterpart composition but no traces of it remain. However, the wall surface in both cases preserves some important indications on the religious use of these images. The fresco with the Virgin was initially flanked by two iron brackets that archeologists have interpreted as lamp stands, while the missing scene on the specular wall had two iron eyelets at the sides. Once again due to the absence of the notion of monumental icons the huge



Figure 2.13 Virgin and Christ Child in the niche, the pillar flanking the altar, monumental icon, Tokali kilise, Cappadocia, Turkey, eleventh century.

Photo: Alexei Lidov.



Figure 2.14 Mother of God, house D of Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria.

Drawing: Maria Lidova after Mieczysław Rodziewicz, *Les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie: à la lumière des fouilles polonaises à Kôm el-Dikka* (Warsaw: Editions scientifiques de Pologne, 1984), 203, Figure.236.

composition in Alexandria has been seen as a reproduction of some unknown decoration of the church apse, though, as previously demonstrated, it may have had other prototypes or appeared as the result of an original plan following general typological patterns.⁸³ The Kom el-Dikka example with its donor composition fixed on the wall, marked by the presence of two lamps at the sides and performing particular religious functions, is highly evocative of the general arrangement of the *Maria Regina* icon from the Oratory of John VII, notwithstanding the evident differences in the *medium*, placement, function of the space (ecclesiastic and private), and rank of the donors.

Concluding remarks

The creation of monumental iconic images was quite a popular tradition in early Byzantium both in the East and the West. As a rule, they were placed in subsidiary chapels or within the *naos* space, sometimes oriented in the direction opposite to the main altar. Differently from theophanic visions in the apse,⁸⁴ due to their lateral position within the ecclesiastical sacred space, they often permitted direct contact with the worshiper and could become proper recipients of personal as well as liturgical prayers.

Inscribed in the sequence and logic of monumental decoration, these images were often placed within a niche or a border that visually separated them from the rest of the paintings and sometimes created an individual space that could have been used for the placement of candles, lamps, votive gifts, relics, and other sacred objects. In a number of cases it is easy to deduce that these monumental icons were the protagonists of special liturgical services, often not strictly related to those performed on the main altar. They often bear iconographic characteristics known from images on wood or quite suitable for panel paintings. If analyzed as monumental icons, these painted or mosaic images might contribute significantly to the extension of our knowledge of both the appearance and the function of devotional images in early Byzantium and perhaps open up new possibilities of research on certain painted compositions in later post-iconoclastic monuments.



Figure 2.15 Veronica holding the image of Christ, Master of St. Veronica, oil on wood, National Gallery, London, ca. 1420.

Photo: © The National Gallery, London.

This chapter has tried to demonstrate that in its original setting the Virgin Orant from the Oratory of John VII acquired the specific characteristics of a monumental icon. Besides the new dimension that this brings to the image, including the problem of the body raised at the beginning of this chapter, it means a completely different way of interacting with the surrounding milieu and with the relics and other “icons” of the space. The image’s varied range of associations with the Incarnation, the Nativity, and famous Marian icons has been discussed. What remains to be seen however is how the possible cult significance of the Orant Virgin alters its relationship to the other most venerated relic – the Veil of Veronica.⁸⁵ As previously mentioned, the twelfth-century ciborium containing the veil was oriented towards the mosaic decoration of the Oratory. Though slightly off the central axis, the image of Christ faced, from a short distance and an apparently quite different height, the icon of *Maria Regina*, thus participating in a spatial dialogue between the two images. Considering the material nature of the Veronica – the veil with the face of Christ miraculously imprinted on it during the path to Calvary – it could speak in a particular way to the textile hanging in front of the standing Orant, whether or not the latter bore figurative imagery. As a consequence, it is not impossible that this medieval installation in Old St. Peter’s, visited and admired by many pilgrims to Rome,⁸⁶ inspired or visually evoked in some way one of the most widespread late medieval iconographies of the *Vera icona*, i.e., the images representing the female figure of the legendary Veronica holding in her raised hands the falling piece of textile bearing the face of Christ (Figure 2.15).⁸⁷ Whether or not the imagery in the southeastern corner of the Vatican church influenced other iconographies, it is worth remembering that the nature, function, and, more importantly, perception of monumental icons evolved over time and at some stage disappeared almost completely. A proper systematization of the material is needed for a full analysis of the phenomenon of monumental icons, but it is already evident that ignoring it implies depriving art history of a very important aspect of medieval art making.

Notes

The origins of this chapter go back to the presentation given at the International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Sophia in 2011. Some of the initial reflections on the topic have come out in a short paper published in Russian in the *Transactions of the State Hermitage Museum* in 2015. I would like to thank Antonella Ballardini and Paola Pogliani for allowing me to publish here a 3D reconstruction of the Oratory and express my gratitude to Prof. Jaś Elsner and Prof. Jean-Marie Sansterre for finding time to read and comment on the draft of this paper.

- 1 Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 115–123; Beat Brenk, “Early Frescoed Icons: A Case of Cultural Divergence between East and West.” In *Byzantine Culture: Papers from the Conference “Byzantine Days of Istanbul.”* Sakel Dean, ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 83–92, 467–472.
- 2 Fresco-icon: Nina Chichinadze, “Fresco-Icons on Façades of Churches in Upper Svaneti (Georgia).” *Kadmos. A Journal of the Humanities* 6 (2014), 68–94. Macro icona: Fabrizio Bisconti, “Immagini cristiane della tarda antichità.” In *Lezioni di archeologia cristiana*. Bisconti Fabrizio and Olof Brandt, eds. (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio

- Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2014), 501–583, 520; icona “parietale” and “monumentale icona murale”: Valentino Pace, “Alla ricerca di un’identità: affreschi, mosaici, tavole dipinte e libri a Roma fra VI e IX secolo.” In *Roma e il suo territorio nel medioevo. Le fonti scritte fra tradizione e innovazione: Atti del convegno internazionale di studio dell’Associazione Italiana dei Paleografi e Diplomatisti* (Roma, 25–29 Ottobre 2012). Cristina Carbonetti, Santi Lucà, and Maddalena Signorini, eds. (Spoleto: CISAM, 2015), 471–498, esp. 480, 487; icona murale: Claudia Tempesta, ed. *L’icona murale di Santa Sabina all’Aventino* (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2010).
- 3 Monumental retables or Vita-icons were a popular phenomenon in late medieval paintings: Lorenzo Riccardi, “Out of Necessity Comes Virtue: A Preliminary Index of ‘Hagiographical Icons’ in the Byzantine and Medieval Wall-Painting in Southern Italy.” In *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art 3* (2013), 163–174; Michele Bacci, “Identity Markers in the Art of Fourteenth-Century Famagusta.” In *The Harbour of All This Sea and Realm*. Michael J. K. Walsh, Tamás Kiss, and Nicholas S. H. Coureas, eds. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), 145–158, 154–155.
- 4 “εἰκών.” In Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 410–416; “Icons.” In *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 977–981; Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992); Beat Brenk, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon: An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2010), 80–107; Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 1–10; Ivan Foletti, “L’icona, una costruzione storiografica? Dalla Russia all’Occidente, la creazione di un mito.” *Annali di critica d’arte* 12 (2016), 175–194.
- 5 However, Herbert Kessler points out that in the middle Byzantine sources the word *eikon* is predominantly used for non-narrative compositions, while narrative scenes are usually mentioned as *istoria*. Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God’s Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 1.
- 6 Ivan Foletti, *Da Bisanzio alla santa Russia: Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925) e la nascita della storia dell’arte in Russia* (Roma: Viella, 2011); Foletti, “L’Icona, una costruzione storiografica?”; Ivan Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia. Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925) and the Invention of the Icon* (Roma: Viella, 2017).
- 7 I am leaving aside the question of miniature painting and illumination as irrelevant for the scope of this chapter.
- 8 On the same problem, see a brief discussion in Kimberly Diane Bowes, “Christian Images in the Home.” *Antiquité Tardive* 19 (2011), 171–190, esp. 177–178.
- 9 On “presence” and “absence,” see Jaś Elsner, “Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium.” *The Art Bulletin* 94/3 (2012), 368–394, esp. 369–371, 385–386.
- 10 I am conscious of the problem of cult and of what kind of images can be considered as cult images. For a brief discussion of this problem, see Brenk, “Early Frescoed Icons.” 87. A separate study of this question and of the existing evidence and scholarship is needed before a proper understanding of this notion can be achieved. One of the greatest confusions, in my view, is connected to the rigid differentiation between the public and private nature of the cult. Many scholars consider icons as cult objects only when they were known to or could have performed a significant role in a public event or an official ecclesiastic service. According to this logic, everything else falls outside the definition of “cult” and should be seen as marginal or purely private phenomena, i.e., not significant for the general development in the use of religious imagery. If taken in its direct meaning, cult can stand for specific religious devotion, which results in the additional manifestations of veneration (votives, gifts, decorations, candles, etc.) before a particular image. For similar views, Charles Barber in Maria Vassilaki, ed., *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan: Skira, 2000), 259–260. An important contribution with an overview of evidence: Jean-Marie Sansterre, “Entre deux mondes? La vénération des images à Rome et en Italie d’après les textes des VIe–XIe siècles.”

- Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 49, no. 2 (2002), 992–1050. It also presupposes the participation of that image in some religious activities, whether liturgy or private prayer. It is in this latter meaning that the word “cult” is used in this chapter.
- 11 Most recently, Vasileios Marinis, “The historia ekklesiastike kai mystike theoria: A Symbolic Understanding of the Byzantine Church Building.” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 108 (2015), 753–770.
 - 12 Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale*, vol. 1 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1994), 400–401, 406–408.
 - 13 On Fayum portraits: Euphrosyne Doxiadis, *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995); Susan Walker, ed. *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000). On complex interaction between Roman portraiture and icons: Gilbert Dagron, “L’image de culte et le portrait.” In *Byzance et les Images*. André Guillou and Jannic Durand, eds. (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1994), 121–150; Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons*.
 - 14 Thomas F. Mathews, “The Emperor and the Icon.” In *Imperial Art as Christian Art, Christian Art as Imperial Art: Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian: Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 15 (2001), 163–177; Thomas F. Mathews, “Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai.” In *Holy Image: Hallowed Ground. Icons from Sinai*. Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins, eds. (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 39–55; Thomas F. Mathews, *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016). For the catalogue of pagan panel paintings: Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Egypte: Iconographies, panthéons et cultes dans le Fayoum hellénisé des IIe-IIIe siècles de notre ère* (Paris: PUPS, 2013).
 - 15 Manfred Luchterhandt, “Il sovrano sotto l’immagine. Icone nei cerimoniali di acclamazione a Roma e a Bisanzio?” In *Text, Bild und Ritual in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft (8.–11.Jh.)*. Patrizia Carmassi and Christoph Winterer, eds. (Firenze: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 45–76; Katherine Marsengill, “The Visualization of the Imperial Cult in Late Antique Constantinople.” In *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in Its Imperial Context*. Lee M. Jefferson and Robin M. Jensen, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 271–306. See also chapter by Carile in this volume.
 - 16 Euseb. Vit. Const. III, 3. Cyril Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (København: I Kommission hos Munksgaard, 1959), 22–24; Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 15–16.
 - 17 Dmitry Ainalov mentions some of them in his classic study “The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art”: Dmitry Ainalov, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art*. Cyril Mango, ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961). See also Brenk, “Early Frescoed Icons,” 85–86; Bowes, “Christian Images in the Home,” esp. 171–172.
 - 18 Suffice it to remember another passage from Eusebius: “I have examined images of the apostles Paul and Peter and indeed of Christ Himself preserved in painting: presumably, men of olden times were heedlessly wont to honor them thus in their houses, as the pagan custom is with regard to saviours.” Eusebius Hist. eccles. VII, 18,4; Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 16.
 - 19 Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 39–40. Alternative translation in: Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil, eds. *The Cult of the Saints: Select Homilies and Letters by Saint John Chrysostom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 43.
 - 20 See also chapter by Marsengill in this volume.
 - 21 Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 139.
 - 22 Not to mention that one of the earliest testimonies of a portrait of a holy person said to have been made during the lifetime of apostle John also took place in the house of

- the believer Lycomedes, who commissioned an image for his own dwelling and whose actions were criticized by the Evangelist: James Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 313–314.
- 23 Giovanni Beccati, ed., *Scavi di Ostia: Edificio con Opus Sectile fuori Porta Marina* (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1969); Maria Andaloro, ed., *L'orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini 312–468: Corpus della pittura medievale a Roma. Vol. I* (Milano: Jaca book, 2006), 276–285; Bente Küllerich, “The Opus Sectile from Porta Marina at Ostia and the Aesthetics of Interior Decoration.” In *Production and Prosperity in the Theodosian Period*. Ine Jacobs, ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 169–187.
- 24 Beccati, *Scavi di Ostia*, 67–68, 385–388, 392–394.
- 25 On the similarity between late antique philosophers’ portraits and images of Christ: Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 310–320; his discussion on the *opus sectile* in Ostia: 315–316.
- 26 Beccati, *Scavi di Ostia*, 79–80.
- 27 *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, vol. 2, David Magie, trans. (London: W. Heinemann, 1922–1932), 235.
- 28 Leila Ibrahim, Robert Scranton, and Robert Brill, eds., *Kenchreai: Eastern Port of Corinth: The Panels of Opus Sectile Glass. II* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).
- 29 Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, 325.
- 30 The green background of the lozenges was altered and changed to porphyry for the portrait.
- 31 Zanker suggests “the pairing of what seem to be teacher and pupil.”
- 32 A wonderful example is provided by the group imperial portrait in the niche of the Luxor temple: M. Jones and S. McFadden, *Art of Empire: The Roman Frescoes and Imperial Cult Chamber in Luxor Temple* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). I am grateful to Jaś Elsner for this reference.
- 33 The orientation of St. Peter’s basilica does not fit the later standard East–West axis, and its main altar points to the West while the congregation still enters the church from the East. Hence, the Oratory was placed in the farthest and opposite side in relation to the sanctuary, main altar, and the tomb of St. Peter. Most recently on the Oratory: Ann van Dijk, “The Oratory of Pope John VII (705–707) in Old St. Peter’s.” PhD Diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1995; Antonella Ballardini, “Un oratorio per la Theotokos: Giovanni VII (705–707) committente a San Pietro.” In *Medioevo: I Committenti (Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Parma, 21–26 Sett. 2010)*. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, ed. (Parma: Electa, 2011), 94–116; Antonella Ballardini and Paola Pogliani, “A Reconstruction of the Oratory of John VII (705–707).” In *Old Saint Peter’s, Rome*. Rosamond McKitterick, John Osborne, and Carol M. Richardson, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 190–213.
- 34 Giuseppe Rocchi Coopmans de Yoldi, “La fabbrica di S. Pietro da Niccolò V a Urbano VIII.” In *San Pietro: Arte e storia nella basilica vaticana*. Giuseppe Rocchi Coopmans de Yoldi, ed. (Bergamo: Bolis, 1996), 71–168, esp. 134–143; Augusto Roca de Amicis, “La facciata di S. Pietro: Moderno e la ricezione dei progetti michelangioleschi nel primo seicento.” In *L’architettura della basilica di San Pietro: storia e costruzione*. Gianfranco Spagnesi, ed. (Roma: Bonsignori, 1997), 297–284; Federico Bellini, *La Basilica di San Pietro: da Michelangelo a Della Porta* (Roma: Argos, 2011).
- 35 Besides the drawings and Grimaldi’s descriptions, the most important evidence of the mosaic decoration are eight fragments (though eleven are known to have been saved originally) dispersed nowadays among various churches and museums. On these fragments: Per Jonas Nordhagen, “The Mosaics of John VII (705–707 A.D.).” *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 2 (1965), 121–166; Maria Andaloro, “Mosaici dell’oratorio di Giovanni VII.” In *Splendori di Bisanzio: Testimonianze e riflessi d’arte e cultura bizantina nelle chiese d’Italia* (Milano: Fabbri, 1990), 262–269; Maria Andaloro, “I mosaici dell’oratorio di Giovanni VII.” In *Fragmenta Picta*.

- Affreschi e mosaici del medioevo romano* (Roma: Argos, 1995), 169–177; Ann van Dijk, “Reading Medieval Mosaics in the Seventeenth Century: The Preserved Fragments from Pope John VII’s Oratory in Old St Peter’s.” *Word & Image* 22, no. 3 (2006), 285–291. The original location of the fragments within the program can be seen on the digital recontraction made for: Maria Andaloro, *La pittura medievale a Roma: 312–1431. Corpus e Atlante: percorsi visivi, vol. I* (Viterbo and Milano: Università della Tuscia; Jaca book, 2006), 41. Among the fragments that survive from the decoration of the Oratory there is also a figure of Joseph, now in the Pushkin Museum: Olga Etinhof, “I mosaici di Roma nella raccolta P. Sevastjanov.” *Bollettino d’Arte* 66 (1991), 29–38.
- 36 On Giacomo Grimaldi: Reto Niggli, *Giacomo Grimaldi (1568–1623): Leben und Werk des römischen Archäologen und Historikers* (München: Bamberger Fotodruck Rudolf Rodenbusch, 1971). The two texts compiled by Giacomo Grimaldi are *Instrumenta autentica translationum sanctorum corporum e sacrarum reliquiarum e veteri in novam principis apostolorum basilicam* (1612: BAV. Barb. lat. 2732; 1619: BAV. Archivio di S. Pietro. G.13; 1619–1620: BAV. Barb. lat. 2733) [the latter was published by Niggli: Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano: Codice Barberini latino 2733*. Reto Niggli, ed. (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1972)] and *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicæ sudario ac lancea qua Salvatoris Nostri Jesu Christi latus patuit in Vaticana basilica maxima veneratione asservatis*, BAV. Archivio Cap. S. Pietro. H.3, 1618. Besides the drawings, the Vatican library preserves an album with watercolors (BAV. Archivio Cap. S. Pietro. A64 ter). Some of the drawings and watercolors were published in: Stephan Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom* (Wien: Schroll-Verlag, 1964).
 - 37 Giuseppe Alfano, *De Basilica Vaticana antiquissima et nova structura*. Michele Cerrati, ed. (Roma: Tip. poliglotta vaticana, 1914); Pierluigi Silvan, “Le origini della pianta di Tiberio Alfano.” *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 62 (1992), 3–23.
 - 38 The earliest mention is in Notitia, 98. Dale Kinney, “The Praesepe in Santa Maria in Trastevere and Santa Maria Maggiore.” In *Marmoribus Vestita. Miscellanea in onore di Federico Guidobaldi*. Olof Brandt and Philippe Pergola, eds. (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2011), 777–795.
 - 39 In case of the Oratory these relics could have originally been kept in the altar and venerated on the feast days, in particular Christmas. Grabar suggests that the relic in question could be the fragment of the crib: André Grabar, *Martyrium: recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Collège de France, 1946), 104.
 - 40 These columns have been identified by scholars as the ones still standing in the chapel of the Sacraments: Van Dijk, “The Oratory of Pope John VII (705–707) in Old St. Peter’s.” 108–115. They may have formed the same group with or simply been used to intentionally recall the six twisted columns once marking the main altar of St. Peter’s basilica. Identical complex architectural elements inevitably created referential links between the sites within the sacred topography of the church. For an alternative view on the provenance of the columns in the Sacrament chapel: John B. Ward-Perkins, “The Shrine of St. Peter and Its Twelve Spiral Columns.” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 42 (1952), 21–33, esp. 31–32. See also Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1994), 573, notes 348–349.
 - 41 Bertelli, followed by Ballardini, links the verbal formula use in the Oratory to the *oikos*, connected to the chapel believed to have been constructed by the Byzantine Emperor Leo I (457–474) and his wife Verina in the Blachernae church especially for the relic of the *maphorion* of the Virgin.
 - 42 On the iconography of the Orant: Nikodim Kondakov, *Иконография Богоматери* [*The Iconography of the Mother of God*] (Moscow: Pravoslavnyi palomnik, 1998)

- vol. I, 60–100; vol. II, 55–123. Originally published in Petrograd in 1914–1915; Eileen Rubery, “From Catacomb to Sanctuary: The Orant Figure and the Cults of the Mother of God and S. Agnes in Early Christian Rome, with Special Reference to Gold Glass.” *Studia Patristica* 73 (2014), 169–214.
- 43 On *Maria Regina* iconography most recently: Maria Lidova, “The Earliest Images of *Maria Regina* in Rome and the Byzantine Imperial Iconography.” *Niš and Byzantium* 8 (2010), 231–243, with detailed bibliography in notes 1, 5.
- 44 The latter might be identified with Raymond of Penafort, proclaimed a saint just a few years earlier by Pope Clement VIII on April 29, 1601.
- 45 Maria Lidova, “Sulla più antica immagine mariana nella diocesi di Firenze: *Maria Regina* nella basilica di San Marco.” In *Giorgio La Pira. L’Assunzione di Maria*. Giulio Conticelli, Stefano De Fiore, and Maria Lidova, eds. (Firenze: Polistampa, 2013), 163–184.
- 46 On square nimbus: Gerhart Ladner, “The So-Called Square Nimbus.” *Mediaeval Studies* 3 (1941), 15–45. John Osborne, “The Portrait of Pope Leo IV in San Clemente, Rome: A Re-Examination of the So-Called ‘Square’ Nimbus, in Medieval Art.” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 47 (1979), 58–65.
- 47 Ann van Dijk, “The Angelic Salutation in Early Byzantine and Medieval Annunciation Imagery.” *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (1999), 420–436.
- 48 John Lowden, “The Word Made Visible: The Exterior of the Early Christian Books as Visual Argument.” In *The Early Christian Book*. William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran, eds. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 13–47.
- 49 On John VII (pontiff from March 1, 705 to October 18, 707): Alberto Rum, “Papa Giovanni VII (705–707): ‘Servus Sanctae Mariae.’” In *De Cultu Mariano Saeculis VI–XI: Acta Congressus Mariologici – mariani Internationalis in Croatia Anno 1971 Celebrati*, vol. III (Roma: Pontifical Marian Academy, 1972), 249–263; Jean-Marie Sansterre, “Jean VII (705–707): Idéologie pontificale et réalisme politique.” In *Rayonnement Grec. Hommages à Charles Delvoye* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1982), 377–388; Andrea Berto, “Giovanni VII.” In *Enciclopedia dei Papi* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2000), 638–640.
- 50 Robert Deshman, “Servants of the Mother of God in Byzantine and Medieval Art.” *Word & Image* 5, no. 1 (1989), 33–70, esp. 36–44.
- 51 Ballardini and Pogliani, “A Reconstruction of the Oratory of John VII (705–707).”
- 52 Whatever kind of relic it was, Ballardini makes an interesting suggestion that it was taken from the Oratory of John VII and used by the pope for the new Marian chapel he created for himself. No evidence exists to suggest what the relic was, but perhaps further research and study of the sources will provide some new data to solve the question: Antonella Ballardini, “L’altare di Giovanni VII (706) e l’apertura della Porta Santa nell’antico San Pietro.” In *Giornata della ricerca del dipartimento di studi storico-artistici, archeologici e sulla conservazione*. Rita Dolce and Antonello Frongia, eds. (Roma: Libro Co. Italia, 2012), 36–38.
- 53 Grimaldi clearly states that the image of Veronica was initially kept in the Oratory of John VII, but no sources survive to support or disprove this assumption. However, the close ties between the Veronica image and the Oratory were clearly present when the new *ciborium* was constructed for the *acheropoiotos* image in this part of the church.
- 54 Van Dijk, “The Oratory of Pope John VII (705–707) in Old St. Peter’s,” 126.
- 55 “columnae e nigro marmore, a quibus olim velum ducebatur ad cooperiendum ipsam [sc. imago]” According to Grimaldi, *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicae sudario*, f. 23v.
- 56 (15 palmi) We do not know the exact technicalities of such operations, but the presence of the “deambulatorium sopra columnos” used to install lighting may have facilitated this procedure. See Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, vol. 2, 461.
- 57 Grimaldi, *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicae sudario*, f. 23v.
- 58 Per Jonas Nordhagen, “The Integration of the Nativity and the Annunciation to the Shepherds in Byzantine Art.” In *Evolution générale et développements régionaux en*

- histoire de l'art, I. Texte*. Rózsa, György, ed. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972), 253–257.
- 59 Joseph Croquison, “L’iconographie chétienne à Rome d’après le Liber Pontificalis.” *Byzantion* 34 (1964), 535–606.
- 60 Ballardini and Pogliani, “A Reconstruction of the Oratory of John VII (705–707).”
- 61 Carlo Bertelli, *La Madonna di Santa Maria in Trastevere: storia, iconografia, stile di un dipinto romano dell’ottavo secolo* (Roma: Eliograf, 1961); Maria Andaloro, “La datazione della tavola di S. Maria in Trastevere.” *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale d’Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte* 19–20 (1975), 139–215; Pietro Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae: antiche icone romane* (Milano and Roma: Mondadori, 1988), 42–46; Maria Andaloro, “Icona della Madonna della Clemenza.” In *Aurea Roma: Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana* (Roma: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2000), 662–663; Maria Lidova, “L’icona acheropita della Vergine di Santa Maria in Trastevere a Roma.” In *Le arti a confronto con il sacro. Metodi di ricerca e nuove prospettive d’indagine interdisciplinare*. Valentina Cantone and Silvia Fumian, eds. (Padova: CLEUP, 2009), 19–28, 233–236; Eadem, “Empress, Virgin, Ecclesia. On the Perception of the Icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere in the Early Byzantine Context.” *IKON* 9 (2016), 109–128.
- 62 Already suggested by Ch. Ihm: Christa Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1960), 63, 243. See also Per Jonas Nordhagen, “Form and Function in the Mosaic Maria Regina from the Oratory John VII (a.d. 705–707) in the Old St. Peter’s.” *Musiva & sectilia* 8 (2011), 193–205. On the Blachernae image: Ioanna Zervou Tognazzi, “L’iconografia e la ‘vita’ delle miracolose icone della Theotokos Brefokratoussa: Blachernitissa e Odighitria.” *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 40 (1986), 215–287; Brigitte Pitarakis, “À propos de la Vierge Orante au Christ Enfant (XIe–XIIe siècles): L’émergence d’un culte.” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 48 (2000), 45–58; Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 145–163.
- 63 As attested in the multiple detailed Byzantine and Latin accounts.
- 64 Per Jonas Nordhagen, “Icons Designed for the Display of Sumptuous Votive Gifts.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), 453–460.
- 65 Wladimir de Grüneisen, *Sainte-Marie-Antique: le caractère et le style des peintures du VIe au XIIIe siècle* (Rome: M. Bretschneider, 1911); Pietro Romanelli and Per Jonas Nordhagen, *Santa Maria Antiqua* (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1964); John Osborne, Rasmus Brandt, and Giuseppe Morganti, eds., *Santa Maria Antiqua al Foro Romano Cento anni dopo: Atti del colloquio internazionale, Roma, 5–6 maggio 2000* (Roma: Campisano, 2004).
- 66 Hans Belting, “Eine Privatkapelle im frühmittelalterlichen Rom.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), 55–69; Natalia Teteriatnikov, “An Interpretation of the Program of the Private Chapel in S. Maria Antiqua: For Whom Is Theodotus Praying?” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 41 (1993), 37–46.
- 67 Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Anna Kartsonis, “The Emancipation of the Crucifixion.” In *Byzance et les Images*. André Guillou and Jannic Durand, eds. (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1994), 151–187, 166–169; Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (c. 680–850): The Sources. An Annotated Survey* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 60–61; Nelson Robert, ed., *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai, Icons from Sinai* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007), 128–129.
- 68 A feature that Belting believed to have had a theological explanation.
- 69 Grüneisen, *Sainte-Marie-Antique*; Adolf Weis, “Ein Vorjustinianischer Ikonentypus in S. Maria Antiqua.” *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 8 (1958), 17–62; Per Jonas Nordhagen, *The Frescoes of John VII (705–707 A.D.) in S. Maria Antiqua in*

- Rome (Spoleto: L'Erma, 1968), 75–76; Belting, “Eine Privatkapelle im frühmittelalterlichen Rom.”
- 70 Remarkable are two specular frescoes in the naos of the church representing St. Demetrius and St. Barbara dated to the seventh century and both preserving signs of nails used to fix precious votive gifts: the Deesis composition and Three Hebrews in a Fiery Furnace on the walls and a niche with saints in the Chapel of Physicians.
- 71 The lower zone with painted textiles was interrupted right at the edge of the image of Saint Anne and the ornamental frieze was placed on top of it.
- 72 Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *The Miraculous Image: In the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Rome: Erma di Bretschneider, 2004).
- 73 John Osborne, “Images of the Mother of God in Early Medieval Rome.” In *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies presented to Robin Cormack*. Antony Eastmond and Liz James, eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 135–156.
- 74 John Osborne, “The Atrium of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome: A History in Art.” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 55 (1987), 186–223, 199.
- 75 David Knipp, “The Chapel of Physicians at Santa Maria Antiqua.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002), 1–23.
- 76 Cinzia Palombi, “Nuovi studi sulla basilica di San Valentino sulla via Flaminia.” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 85 (2009), 469–540; Eadem, “La Basilica di S. Valentino sulla via Flaminia: Nuove ricerche sull’assetto della zona presbiteriale.” In *Scavi e scoperte recenti nelle chiese di Roma*. Hugo Brandenburg and Federico Guidobaldi, eds. (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2012), 153–187.
- 77 The image was originally accompanied by three narrative scenes on the walls (*Visitation, Curing of the Midwife, Bathing of the Child Christ*): John Osborne, “Early Medieval Wall-Paintings in the Catacomb of San Valentino, Rome.” 82–90; Idem, “The Roman Catacombs in the Middle Ages.” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 53 (1985), 278–328, 312–313. Marucchi suggested that the image was originally lit by lamps: Orazio Marucchi, *Il cimitero e la basilica di S. Valentino e guida archeologica della via Flaminia dal Campidoglio al Ponte Milvio* (Roma: Saraceni, 1890), 46.
- 78 “The idea of painting a copy of an icon in a wall niche is, however, a typically Western notion”; “The icon-like frescoes [. . .] both show that by the eighth century the West had developed a reverent yet creative approach towards the icon that was quite different from that of the Byzantine East.” Brenk, “Early Frescoed Icons: A Case of Cultural Divergence Between East and West,” 88, 92.
- 79 Ida Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi: Architecture, Programme, Patronage* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000), 66.
- 80 This comparison is also mentioned by Brubaker in her forthcoming text but here is a result of an independent conclusion. On the image: Nicole Thierry, “La Vierge de Tendresse à L’époque Macédoine.” *Zograf* 10 (1979), 59–70. Thierry discusses a whole series of images in Cappadocia in the tenth century and suggests that their function was similar to icons: “Sur toutes ces représentations, le nombre des graffiti pieux témoigne de leur popularité et la vénération s’attachait à ces peintures murales au même titre qu’à des icons” (Ibid., 66). See also Annabel Jane Wharton, *Tokali Kilise: Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1986), 26, Pl. 7, figs. 118–119; Hanna Wiemer-Enis, *Die Wandmalerei einer kappadokischen Höhlenkirche: die Neue Tokali in Göreme* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1993).
- 81 Mieczysław Rodziewicz, *Les habitations romaines tardives d’Alexandrie: à la lumière des fouilles polonaises à Kôm el-Dikka* (Warsaw: Editions scientifiques de Pologne, 1984), 203, fig. 236.
- 82 For the contextualized discussion of these images within late antique private households: Kimberly Diane Bowes, “Sixth-Century Individual Rituals. Private Chapels and the Reserved Eucharist.” In *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late*

- Antiquity*. Éric Rebillard and Jörg Rüpke, eds. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 54–88, esp. 64–65.
- 83 Rodziewicz, *Les habitations romaines*, 203.
- 84 Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei*; Maria Andaloro and Serena Romano, “L’immagine nell’apside.” In *Arte e iconografia a Roma da Costantino a Cola di Rienzo*. Maria Andaloro and Serena Romano, eds. (Milano: Jaca book, 2000), 92–132; Brenk, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon*.
- 85 Gerhard Wolf, “La Veronica e la tradizione romana di icone.” In *Il Ritratto e la Memoria. Materiali 2*. Augusto Gentili, ed. (Roma: Bulzoni, 1993), 9–36; Ann van Dijk, “The Veronica, the ‘Vultus Christi’ and the Veneration of Icons in Medieval Rome.” In *Old Saint Peter’s, Rome*. Rosamond McKitterick, John Osborne, and Carol M. Richardson, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 229–256; Gerhard Wolf, “Vera Icon.” In *Zwischen Zeichen und Präsenz. Handbuch der Bildtheologie. Bd. III*. François Boespflug and Reinhard Hoeps, eds. (Paderborn; München: Schöningh, 2014), 419–466; Amanda Murphy, Herbert H. Kessler, Marco Petoletti, Eamon Duffy and Guido Milanese, eds., *The European Fortune of the Roman Veronica in the Middle Ages*. Convivium. Supplementum (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).
- 86 On the active use of this space in the sixteenth century, see, for example, a short description of the conversion of the Jews in 1566 in which the image of Veronica is mentioned to have played an important role: Gerd Blum, “Vasari on the Jews: Christian Canon, Conversion, and the Moses of Michelangelo.” *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 4 (2013), 557–577, esp. 564.
- 87 Giovanni Morello and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *Il volto di Cristo* (Milano: Electa, 2000).

3 Imperial bodies and sacred space? Imperial family images between monumental decoration and space definition in Late Antiquity and Byzantium

Maria Cristina Carile

Upon other veils you may see the monarchs joined together, here by the hand of Mary, the Mother of God, there by that of Christ, and all is adorned with the sheen of golden thread.¹

In these words composed for the inauguration of Hagia Sophia in 562, Paul the Silentiary describes the portraits of Emperor Justinian (r. 527–565) and Empress Theodora (r. 527–548) that adorned one side of the Great Church's golden embroidered altar cloth.² Such a double imperial representation showed the favor the Virgin and Christ bestowed upon the couple, demonstrating to all – but especially to those attending the inauguration of the Great Church – the piety of the emperors and their place within the sacred hierarchy that was the basis of the Byzantine cosmology.³ By virtue of their status, the emperors could be depicted in the most sacred place of the church: within the sanctuary and on the altar. The location of the image and its iconography conveyed the holiness of the Roman imperial *basileia*. Furthermore, the necessity to depict both rulers at a time when the empress was already deceased demonstrated not just the importance of Justinian and Theodora as patrons of the church, but also the idea of a Christian empire ruled by the imperial couple.⁴

Images of imperial couples or of imperial families appeared as part of the monumental church decoration since Late Antiquity, and, in the last centuries of Byzantium, this type of imperial portraiture spread, becoming a feature in the territories in the Byzantine cultural sphere outside Constantinople. However, imperial family images were not particularly common in church decoration until after the Komnenian dynasty.⁵ This chapter analyzes imperial family images between the fourth century and the first half of the twelfth century, both simple representations (of the emperor and his sons or of the imperial couple) and extended family portraits, within the context of sacred monumental decoration. In these cases, the collective, familial imperial body was visualized in a monumental way and in locations that affected the meaning of such images. Ultimately, this

chapter ascertains the significance of depictions of the imperial family in sacred spaces – primarily in church buildings, but also in the imperial palace, which was universally declared sacred in the fifth-century Theodosian Code.⁶ Although a great part of the extant evidence survives only in written texts that cannot be compared to now-lost monuments and is mediated by the perception and intention of the writers, by analyzing textual and visual evidence, this chapter aims at understanding the relationship between the imperial family image and the sacred place in which it was represented. Images of the imperial family do not appear to be simple donor portraits or devotional depictions, but involve deeper and more complex meanings that are closely connected to their historical and physical contexts. This approach sheds new light on a crucial point for the conceptualization of sacred space in Byzantium: whether space also became sacred by the presence of images depicting the sacred body of the emperors, or if imperial representations just added an imperial feature to a space already considered as sacred.

In the church

According to Andreas Agnellus, Galla Placidia, empress of the West between 425 and 437, built the imperial church of San Giovanni Evangelista at Ravenna in thanks for her miraculous recovery at sea. Although the original mosaic program was destroyed in 1568, written sources and manuscript illumination provide evidence of the widespread presence of imperial portraits in and around the apse of the church.⁷ This abundance of references has resulted in a long scholarly discussion on the location of the various scenes within the mosaic decoration and several reconstructions, all of which, however, are of little help in visualizing possibly unique iconographies and the original appearances of all the imperial portraits.⁸ Nevertheless, Girolamo Rossi, an eyewitness writing shortly after the destruction of the mosaic, is sufficiently reliable to allow us to understand the location and typology of the imperial portraits.⁹ According to Rossi, on either side of the apse, above the choir, panels showed two imperial couples. The panel on the right depicted Theodosius and Eudokia, emperors of the East at the time of the building of the church,¹⁰ the one on the left presented portraits of Arcadius and Eudoxia, the latter pair being either Emperors Arcadius and his wife or the children of Theodosius II and Eudokia.¹¹ Around or on the triumphal arch were roundels with the effigies of the entire line of emperors to which Placidia herself belonged, the Constantinian, Valentinian, and Theodosian houses.¹²

Meanwhile, on the wall above the triumphal arch, two panels showed Galla Placidia and her children, Valentinian and Honoria, on a boat during a storm at sea being personally saved by St. John the Evangelist.¹³ An artist's interpretation of the appearance of these scenes is recorded in a miniature from a fourteenth-century manuscript in the Biblioteca Classense at Ravenna, beside a transcription of the *Tractatus hedificationis et constructionis ecclesie Sancti Johannis Evangeliste de Ravenna* (Figure 3.1).¹⁴ It shows two boats upon a wavy sea. On the first boat, the empress at the center prays surrounded by her children, while two saintly figures steer the helm and trim the sails, respectively;¹⁵ on the other boat,



Figure 3.1 Fourteenth-century miniature showing Galla Placidia, her children, and St. John during the sea storm. Ravenna, Biblioteca Classense, Cod. 406, f. 11v.

Photo: Under concession of the Istituzione Biblioteca Classense.

the imperial figures turn their heads to the saint who trims the sail. According to previous scholarship, the miniature faithfully reproduces a type of late antique boat; hence, we may assume that also the iconography of the panels was accurately drawn.¹⁶ However, the style of the imperial garments is consistent with the fourteenth-century date of the manuscript, and the miniature seems to reduce the two separate panels that were originally decorating either side of the wall above the triumphal arch to only one scene.

When the description of the mosaics found in Rossi's text is connected to the information reported by Agnellus, the different purpose of the various sets of imperial images within the church is clear. The marine scenes representing the imperial family of the West on the wall above the triumphal arch were narrative images designed to commemorate the event that brought about the construction of the church: the pious imperial family of Ravenna saved by the saint.¹⁷ These should be connected to another mosaic, possibly located at the center between the scenes, where God in majesty was represented giving a book to John the Evangelist,¹⁸ an image that emphasized the importance of the saint in the heavenly court of God. Around or on the triumphal arch was a row of medallion portraits of deceased emperors or of young imperial members who were destined to reign over the eastern and western courts before their premature deaths. An inscription connected the narrative panels and the roundels, reminding the viewer that the empress had raised the church and its mosaic program for herself and for all her

relatives, her children, as well as her glorious ancestors.¹⁹ Inside the apse, the lower register of mosaic decoration was designed to celebrate the eastern court: the panel on the right showed Theodosius II and his wife Eudokia, while the one on the left presented Arcadius and Eudoxia. If the latter were identified with the children of Theodosius and Eudokia, the panels would celebrate the ruling emperors of the East and the heirs of both courts, as Arcadius was destined to become future emperor in the East, and Eudoxia, future empress in the West as betrothed to Valentinian since 424. However, if Arcadius and Eudoxia were Theodosius' parents, the panels would celebrate the role of the imperial couples in the continuation of the Theodosian dynasty, of which Galla Placidia herself was a member, being Theodosius I's daughter and thus Arcadius' half-sister and Theodosius II's aunt. These panels were a tribute to the eastern imperial house that restored Placidia and Valentinian in the west after the defeat of the usurper John (425). Although past scholarship had interpreted them as devotional images, where the emperors were represented in the act of offering gifts, no source refers to the iconography of the scenes and a possible image of gift giving may be inferred only from an inscription running above the mosaic.²⁰ That inscription, however, may have referred either to the donation of the cross by Theodosius II in Jerusalem or to a donation made by Galla Placidia and her heirs to the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme at Rome shortly earlier.²¹ In any case, the lower register of the apse was designed to present the role of the eastern imperial family in the empire and their orthodoxy to the viewer, since the imperial panels flanked a mosaic located just above the bishop's chair, where Peter Chrysologus, archbishop of Ravenna and good friend of Galla Placidia, was also represented as officiating over the liturgy.²²

The mosaic program of San Giovanni Evangelista cannot be considered solely an example of *ex-voto* imagery, as it abounds in imperial images, which are of several and different typologies and bear different meanings. The decoration of the presbytery as a whole was designed to celebrate Placidia's family, her orthodoxy, and her imperial dynasty, utilizing the imperial body in different ways, producing narrative scenes for the ruling family of the West, effigies of deceased emperors and devotional images of the eastern emperors. Diverse iconographic schemes were adopted to depict living and dead emperors, as well as to present the ruling imperial family, both of the West and of the East.

Furthermore, the mosaic program was designed to show the ideological hierarchy of the Christian empire. The apse's lower register, with the images of the eastern court and of the liturgy performed by Peter Chrysologus, represented the necessary foundation for the manifestation of Christ on the throne in the conch of the apse. Above it, the wall over the triumphal arch was meant to remind the viewer of the kingdom of God that past emperors, shown by their effigies in the roundels,²³ had already achieved, and that – by virtue of her orthodoxy and John the Evangelist's intercession – Galla Placidia and her heirs were destined to reach. In this way the bodies of the emperors, reproduced by different representational modes and in different locations within the apse, were meant to convey several messages to the viewer. While celebrating St. John's personal favor and

intercession, at once they demonstrated the political position of the earthly court in the Christian order of the empire, the pious orthodoxy of the imperial house, the empress' awareness of her glorious past and her will for the future of her dynasty.

The abundance of imperial portraits in the apse of the church of San Giovanni Evangelista is an extraordinary, but lost, case study that allows us to understand the representational modes adopted to depict the imperial family within late antique ecclesiastical mosaic programs and the several levels of meanings that imperial images could carry in church decoration. Two other basilicas of late antique Ravenna provide further evidence for imperial family portraits: the church of San Vitale (inaugurated in 548–549) and the church of Sant' Apollinare in Classe, where in the seventh century an imperial panel was added to the sixth-century apse mosaic.²⁴

At San Vitale, the famous imperial panels in the lower register of the apse represent, at the one side, Justinian and Archbishop Maximian within the court dignitaries and the clergy of Ravenna;²⁵ at the other side, the empress Theodora and her court of eunuchs and ladies. The imperial couple is depicted at the center of their respective panels, nimbed, in full regalia, with precious vessels in their hands (Figures 3.2–3.3). Their centrality within the composition, static posture and precious attire emphasize the solemnity of the portraits. As Charles Barber and Natalia Teteriatnikov argued, this is a gendered iconography where the role of the two rulers is made visible by their separate portraits with their respective courts.²⁶ In this case, rather than depicting the imperial couple together in one and the same panel, the iconographer separated the two emperors to enrich the mosaic program with further meaning. Here, the panels represent at once the two bodies of the earthly imperial power (the emperor and the empress); the male and



Figure 3.2 Ravenna, church of San Vitale, sixth-century mosaic panel showing Emperor Justinian, Bishop Maximian, and their respective courts.

Photo: Maria Cristina Carile.



Figure 3.3 Ravenna, church of San Vitale, sixth-century mosaic panel showing Empress Theodora and her court.

Photo: Maria Cristina Carile.

feminine courts; a symbolic donation of the emperors to God and, likely, a representation of the real ceremony of imperial entrance into the church building with the emperor preceded by the bishop and the empress entering after.²⁷ The idea of gift giving is visualized through the presence of a jeweled paten and chalice in the emperor's and empress' hands, respectively, and of the Magi decorating the lower hem of the empress' *chlamys*. The reference to a precious donation may commemorate a specific event – of which however there is no historical trace – or maybe interpreted as a symbolic representation of the piety of the Christian earthly court to God.²⁸ Since Justinian and Theodora were never in Ravenna and the basilica of San Vitale had been built by the bishopric, the inclusion of the imperial portraits in the apse program should be seen as the Church of Ravenna's tribute to the emperors who had reconquered the city during the Gothic war in 540. The whole apse program seems a celebration of the new order established after that event.

Visually, the sacred bodies of the imperial couple are connected to the image of Christ at the center of apse conch. The emperors' *chlamys* and Christ's tunic are made of the same purple color, which in Byzantium was not only an expensive hue, but a color reserved to the use of the emperor with strong imperial connotations and a Christ-mimetic function, recalling the blood poured by dying on the cross.²⁹ To the viewer looking at the presbytery, the dark purple robes mark three corners of a precise triangle with Christ at the vertex and the rulers, who are both nimbed in order to emphasize their status as holy Roman emperors, defining the two points of the triangle's base (Figure 3.4). Considering that during the liturgy the clergy was seated on the apse choir with the archbishop on the central marble chair, the sanctuary became an ensemble of living and depicted bodies.



Figure 3.4 Ravenna, church of San Vitale, sixth century, interior.

Photo: Maria Cristina Carile.

It conveyed to the viewer a visual image of the Christian order of the empire: at the apex the epiphany of Christ dominated the scene from the center of the apse conch; underneath, at the sides of the apse was the earthly court, whose power derived from God; on a third, earthly level, the Church of Ravenna was arranged on the choir, the bishop seated directly below Christ, emphasizing that the Church of Ravenna was ruled directly by Christ.

However, the imperial portraits were truly visible only to those standing inside the bema of the church: due to the depth of the presbytery, the imperial panels were barely visible all at once to anyone attending the liturgy from the center of the nave. Therefore, at San Vitale the bishopric of Ravenna demonstrated its devotion to the imperial house by installing the imperial portraits in highly symbolic locations within the mosaic program;³⁰ while simultaneously it asserted the

bishop's own power to the Christian congregation by declaring the archbishop's role within the Christian order of the empire. In this way, the living clergy in the apse showed their submission to God and the emperors, but clearly demonstrated their authority in the city.

The seventh-century imperial panel in the apse of Sant'Apollinare in Classe depicts another example of imperial family portrait and, concurrently, the expression of another political statement by the Church of Ravenna (Figure 3.5). There, at the northern side of the apse windows, a narrative image represents the emperor Constantine IV (668–685) granting privileges to the bishop of Ravenna.³¹ The mosaic reproduces the scheme of the imperial panel of Justinian at San Vitale. It depicts nine figures, the four on the left-hand side all dressed in official court garments, the others in ecclesiastical costumes. The emperor stands at the center with two bishops. Although the mosaic was heavily restored,³² the scene maintains the original iconography and its major features. Beside the emperor are his brothers and co-emperors, Tiberius and Heraclius.³³ They are all nimbed – as is one of the bishops at the center, possibly representing a saint³⁴ – and dressed in ceremonial attire, to indicate their sacred imperial status. In this way, the patron of the mosaic – probably the same archbishop Reparatus (671–677) to whom

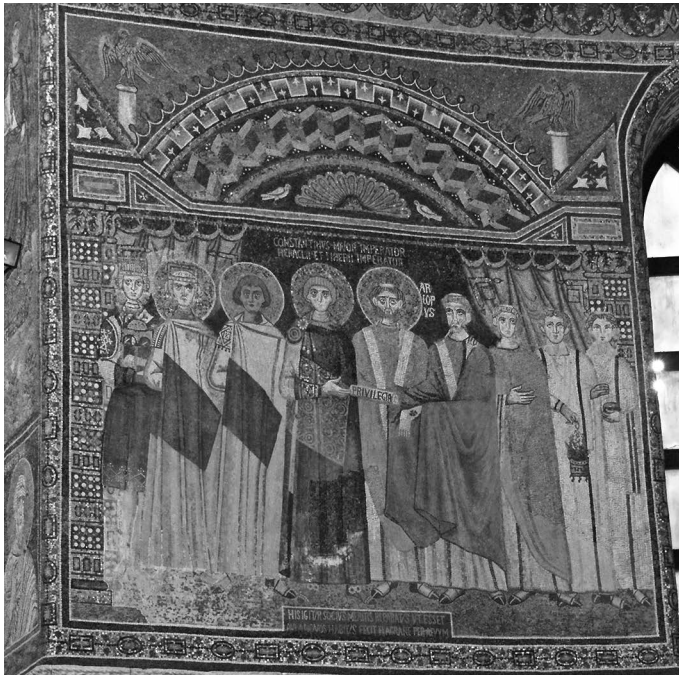


Figure 3.5 Seventh-century mosaic panel with Constantine IV granting privileges to the bishop. Ravenna, basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe.

Photo: Walter Borghini.

Constantine IV granted the tax concessions – celebrated not only the Byzantine emperor in charge, but also his brothers, associated with the throne and destined to succeed to the emperor. Here the intention was to pay tribute to the whole dynasty that would have maintained the rule of the Byzantine Empire from that time onwards. The inclusion of living members of that dynasty may be an act of obsequiousness toward the court and indicative of investment in the future relationship between the bishopric of Ravenna and Constantinople. The location of the mosaic inside the apse, in a position analogous to the imperial panel of San Vitale, is testimony to the desire to continue a tradition, already found in the other major church of Ravenna. In this case, due to the large dimensions of the apse, the panel would have been more visible from the congregation standing in the main nave than at San Vitale. Still, its position was not prominent. Therefore, the imperial panel was not meant to interfere with or to add significantly to the meaning of the apse program, which celebrated the Transfiguration of Christ and the founder of the local church, St. Apollinaris, pictured in the apse conch, and also portrayed the most historically significant local bishops in the lower register of the apse below the main scene of the Transfiguration.

The inclusion of family portraits within or around church apses does not seem to be a feature of late antique and early medieval Ravenna only. Rather, Ravenna is extraordinary because there the artistic evidence is still extant. Sufficient textual evidence attests to the presence of similar images of the imperial family in analogous locations into church buildings also in the capital. In the church of the *Zoodochos Pegé*, outside the walls of Constantinople, a tenth-century text reports that after her miraculous recovery from an illness, the empress Irene (780–802) commissioned portraits of herself and her son Constantine VI.³⁵ The co-emperors were represented in the act of offering gifts, “on both sides of the church,” thus perhaps in two gendered panels placed next to or near the main apse of the church that, at that time, would have retained much of its sixth-century form.³⁶ The source explains the meaning of this representation: the mosaic expressed the faith of the emperors and showed the miracle of the empress’ healing for all time to viewers.

Such images of the emperors making offerings – either real donations (such as in the church of the *Zoodochos Pegé*), political privileges (such as in Sant’ Apollinare in Classe), or more symbolic acts of piety (such as in San Vitale) – evoke the ceremony involved with benefactions to churches on the occasion of imperial visits or to the Great Church on major feasts.³⁷ As we have seen, these images may also memorialize imperial thanksgiving to a particular saint and the church.

A tenth-century manuscript reports that portraits of Emperor Leo (457–474) and Empress Verina flanked the icon of the enthroned *Theotokos* on the ciborium over the Virgin’s relics in the Church at the Blachernae.³⁸ The emperors were also depicted with their children,³⁹ a family portrait showing the devotion of the imperial couple and their heirs to the *Theotokos*. This text is a fundamental source for the invention of the Virgin’s veil and for its cult developed under emperors Leo and Verina.⁴⁰ However, here its importance resides in the fact that for the first time it connects the depiction of the whole imperial family (the emperors and their heirs) not only with a portrait of the Virgin in majesty, but with a saintly relic and

a piece of liturgical furniture with great symbolic content. Setting aside questions of the historical accuracy concerning the date of the portraits, by the time of the description recorded in the tenth-century manuscript, it was perfectly acceptable to locate portraits of the imperial family responsible for the new setting for the Virgin's veil on the ciborium in the sacred chapel dedicated to that purpose. On the ciborium, the whole family surrounded the image of the Virgin on a jeweled throne. Underneath the ciborium – possibly inside an altar – was the jeweled coffer holding the relic. This installation was located in the bema of the *soros*, the holy chapel. Thus, through a chain of symbolic elements, the represented bodies of the emperors were associated with the holiness of the relic and its sanctuary. The ciborium was an element of high cosmic significance, recalling the vault of the skies,⁴¹ on it was the portrait of the Virgin surrounded by the imperial family, conveying the idea that the pious imperial family was destined for the Heavenly Kingdom. Visually, the group formed by the image on the ciborium, the sanctuary, and the *soros* itself expressed at once the piety of the emperors, their devotion towards the *Theotokos*, the connection of the imperial house to the Virgin – a message perhaps even stronger in the tenth century, when the Virgin had acted as the *palladium* of the capital for centuries⁴² – and the sacrality of the imperial family.

Similar images of the imperial family surrounding the Virgin or Christ became frequent in the Middle Byzantine period, exemplified by the numerous mosaic examples in the southern gallery at Hagia Sophia. One in particular deserves attention. On the east wall of the southern gallery, in the area of the Great Church reserved to the court, beside the door that led to an elevated passage connecting the church to the palace and to the north of a large window piercing the east wall of the gallery,⁴³ Constantine IX (1042–1055) and Zoe are represented offering gifts to Christ *Pantokrator* (Figure 3.6). Due to the alteration of the rulers' portraits and the emperor's inscription, the mosaic has been interpreted as originally depicting Zoe's first husband Romanos (ca. 1028–1042) that, after the empress' third marriage, was replaced by a portrait of Constantine (ca. 1042–1050).⁴⁴ Romanos III Argyros (1028–1034) is known to have given substantial donations to Hagia Sophia and both the *apokombion* in the emperor's hands and the inscription over Zoe's roll point to an imperial donation of some sort.⁴⁵ The replacement of Zoe's face at the same time with a new version has been interpreted as evidence of her concern with beauty and, in the context of the present book, is certainly indicative of the importance of the appearance of the imperial body in portraits that were meant to commemorate an event to posterity.⁴⁶ However, the location of the portrait on the eastern wall of the gallery, between the opening to the apse and the door leading to the imperial palace, is far more important. The portrait was not very prominent to the eyes of the faithful standing in the main nave; but, when looking to the apse from the west gallery, it would have been framed by the columns of the southeastern arcaded conch. Indeed, since the abundance of windows in the apse and the plain walls surrounding it would have made it impossible to place the mosaic anywhere else without compromising the structure, this was the closest the mosaic portrait could be to the apse as well as the most visible location,



Figure 3.6 Istanbul, Hagia Sophia, Constantine IX (1042–1055) and Zoe.

Photo: Image in the public domain, licensed under *Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication*.

even from the main nave.⁴⁷ Furthermore, when exiting from the south arm, the court could not fail to see the mosaic and its proximity with the apse: to the left of the imperial panel were the apse windows and, right above them, the *Theotokos* dominating the apse conch. The imperial panel stood as a reminder of Zoe and her husband's generosity for posterity.

The same considerations must have guided John II Komnenos (1118–1143) and his wife Irene, who had their portraits placed on the southern side of the east wall's window in the south gallery a few decades later (Figure 3.7).⁴⁸ Their mosaic reproduces the same iconography as its pendant, with only the *Theotokos* in place of the figure of Christ at the center. In 1122 the imperial panel was transformed into a family portrait by adding the image of John and Irene's son Alexios, at that time elevated co-emperor, to the left of the empress, on the surface of the engaged pillar found at the right side of the mosaic. In this way, the purpose of the whole composition changed: beside the commemoration of a pious imperial donation, the mosaic became a celebration of the piety of the entire family. As Natalia Teteriatnikov has demonstrated, the imperial panels of Constantine IX and Zoe and of John II, Irene, and Alexios were executed with such a technical ability that they can be admired from a close range view, but also perceived as if they were looking at the beholder from a distance.⁴⁹ Furthermore, they were purposely located in visible positions, especially for those members of the court that would have left Hagia Sophia from the eastern passageway to the palace. To the eyes of courtiers and members of the imperial family, the only people allowed in the southern arm of



Figure 3.7 Istanbul, Hagia Sophia, John II Komnenos (1118–1143) and his wife Irene.

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the gallery, and to emperors that occasionally used that space during ceremonies,⁵⁰ the imperial panels functioned as labels: they defined the eastern side of southern gallery as an imperial space, while at the same time opened to another imperial space, the palace itself. The patron of the mosaics notwithstanding, the depicted bodies of Zoe and Constantine and of John's family demarcated the liminal space between the Great Church and the palace. Furthermore, the depicted bodies of the emperors expressed their presence beyond time and events, as reminders of the piety of those emperors and of their *basileia* to future generations. Thus, these were devotional imperial panels and state declarations of the emperors' place into the Christian empire ruled by God, for which Christ and the Virgin stand.

In all these dynastical images different representational modes express different messages. Gendered portraits of the imperial couple display the particular political role of an empress, such as for Theodora in San Vitale and Irene at the *Zoodochos Pegé*.⁵¹ Portraits of the whole family generally show the imperial orthodoxy and the value of both the empresses, such as Galla Placidia and Verina, and the imperial heirs in the continuation of the empire under the same dynasty. This idea was emphasized under new dynasties or under the sole rule of an empress, such as for instance during the time of Galla Placidia. Similarly, portraits of the emperors and sons or co-emperors emphasized the power and value of a dynasty for the present and future rule of the empire.

At Ravenna, in San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe, the emperors are depicted in the apse, at the base of the walls' mosaic program, as if the glory of Christ in majesty on the apsidal conches of these churches descended directly upon the emperors. They are depicted standing, in the act of offering, thus as pious emperors honoring God – indeed a strong message for the viewer. At the same time, in these buildings the imperial portrait at the sides of the apse were barely visible from the nave, hence the patrons (the archbishops of the city) intended to

express their own religious and political role to the viewer, and only secondarily glorify the emperors.

The location of the imperial portraits in or around the apse, the most sacred place into a church building, also displays the privileged status of the emperors as God's administrators on earth and their orthodoxy. Imperial portraits appeared also in other sacred locations: such as on the ciborium directly above the Virgin's relics in the church of the Blachernae, or on the eastern wall of the south gallery of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul, close to the Virgin in the main apse and almost – but not quite – at the same height of it. In the Pigeon House Church at Çavuşin (Capadocia) the family portrait of Nicephoros II Phokas (963–969),⁵² which scholars have shown to be a tribute to the ruling dynasty by the church patron, occupied the entire northern apse of the tripartite sanctuary,⁵³ which was smaller than the central apse. Here, in a non-imperial church – since the building was completed before one of the patrons, John Tzimiskes, achieved the throne⁵⁴ – the emplacement of the imperial portraits in a prominent location (the northern niche on the eastern wall beside the apse), but not at the same height of the apse conch, follows the pattern of the imperial portraits in the south gallery at Hagia Sophia. Thus, beside the heavenly dimension represented in the apse conch, the positioning of the imperial panels in or near the apse, but at a lower level with respect to the conch or on a lower register, demonstrated the place of the emperors in the Christian hierarchy of the empire. As their power derived from God, their bodies were visually represented underneath the image of God, yet their status put them above all others, in an intermediate location between the summit of the structure and the floor – a level that was not heavenly but not earthly either. Indeed, the location of these images always in connection to the apse or the sanctuary shows that the sacred bodies of the emperors, nimbed and in ceremonial attire, participated in and benefitted from the holiness of the church sanctuary.

In the imperial palace

As the late antique and Byzantine imperial palaces are now lost or in ruins, an analysis of the images of the imperial family in the palatine contexts is bound to texts, which unfortunately were not primarily aimed at describing the palace decoration and therefore should be approached with great caution.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, there is enough written evidence to help us understand the significance of depictions of the imperial family within these spaces, where the imperial body represented in monumental decoration was put in relation with the real emperors that inhabited the palace.

Eusebius' famous description of the fourth-century image of Constantine over the palace entrance at Constantinople celebrates the Christian faith of the emperor who exercised his power against the enemies of Christianity. Eusebius tells of an icon of Constantine accompanied by his sons, trampling a dragon.⁵⁶ Although Eusebius does not specify who among Constantine's sons was depicted in this image, portraying the living emperor beside his sons clearly declared that the ruler's power would be inherited by his male heirs, who would continue their

father's example, fighting against the enemies of Christianity. The entrance of the Great Palace of Constantinople, the *Chalké*, has always been a location of strong political statements.⁵⁷ Being the main gate of the Great Palace, it constituted the liminal space between the city and the monumental structure symbolizing the empire, since the imperial palace was the seat of the imperial administration and the residence of the emperor in his capacity of ruler.⁵⁸ As it appears from the words of Eusebius, the display of images at the palace entrance worked as a public declaration of the imperial political inclinations. It is in the same perspective that we should understand an image showing a cross with prophets and apostles, accompanied by scriptural quotations, that Leo III (717–741) and his son and co-emperor Constantine set “in front of the palace.”⁵⁹ While later sources identify the latter emperors as the initiators of iconoclasm, in the words of the eyewitness Germanus, this image showed their piety. Similarly, in the following years until 843, the setting of images on the *Chalké* – either the cross, accepted by iconoclasts or the iconophile portrait of Christ – demonstrated the attitudes of the emperors against or in favor of icon veneration.⁶⁰ Furthermore, on or around the *Chalké*, the display of imperial statues made visible the glory of the empire. There, statues of single emperors or family groups, including the imperial couple or the empress and her heirs, celebrated the role of various dynasties in securing the fortune of the empire: above all the Constantinian, Theodosian, and Justinian houses.⁶¹ The imperial statues that adorned the *Chalké* and its surroundings should be connected to the abundance of imperial statuary in the *Augusteon* square and the *Milion* – both places adjacent to the palace.⁶² In this way, all the public spaces associated with the imperial heart of the city were transformed into monuments of dynastical celebration, in a visual climax leading to the majestic symbol of the empire, the palace itself.

Such emphasis on the imperial family was displayed even in the interior decoration of the *Chalké* rebuilt by Justinian after the Nika riot (532). There, not just the emperor, but the imperial couple together stood at the center of the dome over the bodies of the Vandal and Goth kings who had been defeated by Justinian's troops. All around them, the senate was depicted celebrating their imperial victory, while amid images of war General Belisarius was shown bringing spoils to the emperor.⁶³ Depictions of the emperor and the empress with their court visualized the power of the imperial couple in ruling the empire, no less in the *Chalké* of Justinian, where in addition to the dynastical theme implicit in a depiction of the imperial couple, the wall decoration celebrated their glory as the emperors who had reconquered the empire from the barbaric kingdoms. However, the location of the imperial image at the center of the dome – an architectural form of supreme cosmic significance, since it was believed to be the shape of heavens⁶⁴ – underscored the symbolic implications of such a depiction, where the rulers were represented as the “sacred pair,” borrowing Agathias' words,⁶⁵ in an image that highlighted their role as the victorious sovereigns at the apex of the *taxis* (order) of the empire.

About a century earlier, an analogous image located in the atrium of the imperial palace at Ravenna depicted a rejoicing crowd acclaiming the imperial couple

Valentinian III (425–455) and his wife Eudoxia.⁶⁶ Referring to their imperial heirs and wishing the family a long life, the poet Merobaudes states that the imperial portrait was at the apex of the ceiling, shining with light, and their image there united the stars of heaven and earth, thus using a cosmic metaphor well suited to emphasize the idea of a divine imperial power. In this passage, the poet also gives emphasis to the “sacred offspring” (*sacra pignora*) of the imperial marriage and imperial succession, thereby implicating the central role of the imperial couple in the continuation of the empire.⁶⁷

Similar focus on the continuation of the dynasty is shown in representations of the entire imperial family. In another fifth-century poem, Merobaudes describes the depiction of Valentinian, Eudoxia, their children, and the emperor’s mother and sister (Galla Placidia and Honoria) banqueting with the personification of Harmony (*Concordia*) on the ceiling of the triclinium of the palace of Ravenna.⁶⁸ Clearly, this image, which included the emperor’s mother and sister and the imperial heirs, exalted the past and the future of the dynasty in a location of great imperial display – the banquet hall – where the emperor would present himself to his guests at the center of the court hierarchy.⁶⁹

Another image of the imperial family was set in the triclinium of the palace at Aquileia.⁷⁰ An anonymous panegyric written in 307 mentions a portrait of the young Constantine and his future wife, Fausta,⁷¹ the daughter of Maximian. Fausta was represented in the act of offering a helmet – a symbol of the imperial power – to Constantine, who, through his marriage to her, became the younger emperor. The panegyric’s exultation of Maximian and Constantine, which was sung on the day of Constantine’s and Fausta’s wedding ceremony,⁷² reveals the political purpose of that union, while the image undoubtedly further expressed Maximian’s intention to ally himself with Constantine through marriage with his daughter.

The tenth-century *Vita Basilii* provides evidence for another depiction of the imperial family, this time, the one of Basil I (867–886), which was set on the walls and on the ceiling of the emperor’s bedchamber in the imperial palace of Constantinople. There, possibly on the upper register of the wall decoration, Basil and his wife Eudokia were presented, enthroned and crowned with diadems. All around, their male and female children were depicted in ceremonial attire holding holy books.⁷³ The writer explains that this image demonstrated the education that Basil – who was definitely not a man of letters – had provided his male and female heirs.⁷⁴ On the ceiling, around a golden cross, the emperors and their children were raising their arms to the cross, while an inscription celebrated the victory of the empire in the name of God and His symbol. Other inscriptions of thanksgiving declared the meaning of these images: the imperial couple thanked God on behalf of their children and so did the children on behalf of their parents.⁷⁵ The children’s inscription also compared Basil to David, while wishing the parents to reach the Heavenly Kingdom.⁷⁶ Although the imperial bedchamber should be considered among the private apartments reserved to the use of the emperor, clearly its decorative program was intended to present the imperial family as a dynasty of rulers worthy to administer the empire in the name of God and, at the same time, to represent the emperor as a pious and victorious sovereign. It was therefore

also likely that the bedchamber was the location for some courtly ceremonies and as such could be entered by court dignitaries.⁷⁷ The family image reminded these viewers – and also the readers of the *Vita Basilii* (and perhaps the emperor himself) – that Basil, a man of non-imperial origins, became emperor in the name of God and that it was in the name of God his family would continue to reign.

Later descriptions of the imperial family in palatine buildings still emphasize dynastic themes through the use of new and various iconographies. Around 1118 Nicholas Challikles celebrated John Komnenos' paintings in the *Kouboukleion* (golden chamber), an audience hall of the Blachernae palace.⁷⁸ The room was adorned with a decorative cycle centered on three major scenes: one showing the military victories of John's father Alexios, another one showing Alexios on his deathbed, and a third one with John and the sun in an attitude of mourning. In this case, John, whose accession to the throne had been particularly difficult, celebrated himself not only by being represented beside the sun, but by remembering the glory of his father and showing grief for his death.⁷⁹ Indeed, this image was an attempt to legitimize the reigning emperor's power through a declaration of his obeisance to his victorious father.

Although a reconstruction of the spaces decorated with these imperial images is impossible, a reflection on their role within their original location may help us to understand the relationship between the imperial images and the spaces they occupied. Images of the imperial family on or around the *Chalké* gate were political representations of the Christian ruler and the imperial victory with propagandistic intent, which further underscored the idea of the strength of the dynasty with the addition of images of his heirs or the empress. Images of the imperial couple in the atrium of their palace functioned in the same way, as the atrium was located after the main gate or before rooms of particular ceremonial importance. Several depictions were set in the banquet hall or in other reception rooms – such as the *Kouboukleion* at the Blachernae palace – that served as prominent locations to display the hierarchy and the wealth of the empire to the court and other privileged guests. These powerful dynastic representations of the rulers, although bearing different iconographies, reminded viewers of the legitimacy of the imperial family and the continuation of the dynasty.

From the time of Constantine onwards, the choice of iconographies for imperial family images in the palace appears restricted to themes emphasizing imperial victory and the Christian faith of the rulers. Classical themes underscored the long tradition of the dynasty as well as its fine education by conveying the idea of the strength of the empire. Christian symbols and figures associated with such images reminded the viewer of the legitimacy of the pious rulers who exercised their power according to God's will. In any case, the underlying intent of imperial family images was to stress the right of the entire dynasty to rule the empire, by virtue of a glorious ancestor or presenting themselves as a powerful emperor with worthy progeny.

The imperial *basileia* was considered a sacred institution conferred by God to the emperor, and the palace a sacred symbol of the empire. Imperial images with classical or Christian themes set within palatine spaces where important imperial

display occurred both conveyed the magnificence of the imperial palace – as the imperial image had the power to glorify the place in which it was set⁸⁰ – and glorified the rulers in return.⁸¹ Just as the imperial *basileia* was considered sacred, so was the imperial palace. The represented body of the emperors within images set in the palace also interacted with the rulers who inhabited those places: the depicted image of past emperors and the presence of the emperors in charge conveyed simultaneously to viewers the timeless continuity of the imperial *basileia*. The sacredness of the imperial power was expressed by both the depicted and real presence of the emperors, at the same time. In this context, the setting of imperial images within the palace had the inherent purpose of emphasizing its sacredness as well as the intention to act as a powerful means of political propaganda.

*

In conclusion, our knowledge of imperial family images set in sacred spaces – church buildings and the imperial palace – is for the most part bound to texts and thus conveyed through the perceptions or intentions of the writer. However, in the imperial images analyzed herein, which were patronized by the imperial family or distinguished members of the court, the bodies of the imperial family members were clothed with all the insignia of their power and therefore were official icons of the state.⁸² The real body of emperors represented in images immortalized to the viewer the presence of the empire as a sacred institution. Furthermore, these images did not show the emperor only, but the imperial couple alone or together with their children, or again the emperor, his co-emperors and children, destined to the throne. Therefore, these images emphasized the value of the group as a representation of the dynasty that was destined to reign. While representations of the emperor and the empress emphasized the strength of the imperial marriage and its political value for the present of the empire, images of the imperial couple with their heirs or of the emperor and co-emperors underlined the importance of the dynasty for the future of the empire. It is perhaps significant that gendered portraits of the emperor and the empress abounded under the reigns of particularly powerful empresses – such as Theodora, Justinian's wife, or Irene, who first reigned on behalf of her son Constantine VI and then became the sole ruler (780–790, 797–802). From the preceding evidence, the involvement of empresses in active politics seems to have resulted in displays of their imperial status and lineage by means of imperial family images, thereby making their right to the throne and their power clear – for instance at the time of Galla Placidia (between 425 and 438) or Zoe (1028–1050).⁸³ Although the iconography of the imperial family portraits changes depending on the ecclesiastical or palatine context, significantly, imperial family images always convey the idea of the cohesion and strength of the dynasty, thus bear an underlying political intent regardless of the specific iconography.

The imperial family was considered sacred, as it is demonstrated by monumental inscriptions and titles, thus its depiction in places that were equally considered sacred – either for the mystery of the Eucharist that took place there (the church)

or for being associated to the holy *basilieia* itself (the imperial palace) – augmented the sacrality of that space. This is certainly true for the palace, where monumental dynastical images appear to be reminders of the deeds, glory, or piety of determined emperors and were meant to stand as memorials to the holy *basileia* of those emperors for future viewers. In the palace, the location of imperial images in prominent locations (on domes, ceilings, and walls) inside the most conspicuous halls for the display of power and their iconography – either classical or overtly Christian – conveyed to the viewer the sacred nature of the dynasty. While classical themes associated the emperors with divine figures, such as the sun or the personification of virtues, Christian themes communicated the notion of imperial piety and the right to rule the sacred empire on behalf of God.

In the church, the inclusion of imperial family images within or around apses or in connection to sacred relics, on the one hand, displayed the sacrality of the imperial family and, thus, its right to be placed in the most sacred place of the church. On the other hand, it benefitted the emperors with the holiness that came from placing their portraits in connection to images of God or the Virgin. Furthermore, as the late antique basilica was supplanted by more articulated architectural types of buildings, the location of the imperial image changed from the central apse to more private, but equally sacred places; this appears both in the tenth-century Pigeon House Church at Çavuşin and in the south gallery at Hagia Sophia. However, it was always in proximity to the sanctuary or relics, signifying that the imperial power derived from and was integral to the sacred Christian order of the empire.

The depiction of the sacred imperial body of the emperors acted as a marker of sacrality in a given space. The imperial bodies represented in images set in spaces that were already considered as sacred both emphasized the sacredness of the imperial *basileia* and augmented the sacrality of the space, visually inserting it in a conceptual dominion where the dynastical succession of families was granted by God's will thus was in accordance with the political theology ruling the empire. In conclusion, far from simply decorating the walls of churches or palaces, monumental images of the imperial dynasty added special meaning to these sacred spaces and at the same time participated in making these spaces sacred.

Notes

- 1 “ἐν δ’ ἐτέροις πέπλοις συναπτομένους βασιλῆας / ἄλλοθι μὲν παλάμαις Μαρῖης θεοκύμονος εὐροῖς, / ἄλλοθι δὲ Χριστοῖο θεοῦ χειρὶ πάντα δὲ πῆνης / νήμασι χρυσοπόρων τε μίτων ποικίλλεται αἴγλη” Paul the Silentiary. *Ekphrasis*. 802–805. In Prokop, *Werke*, Vol. 5. Otto Veh, ed. (Munich: Heimeran, 1977), 351; English translation in Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 89.
- 2 Scholars have long debated if the fabrics Paul describes as decorated with Christian themes were the ciborium curtains or the altar cloth of the church. For this latter theory, today generally accepted: Thomas F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 165–167; Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino, “The Architecture of Ekphrasis: Construction and Context of Paul the Silentiary’s Poem on Hagia

- Sophia." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12, no. 1 (1988), 47–82. For a summary and discussion of the various interpretations: Maria Luigia Fobelli, *Un tempio per Giustiniano. Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli e la* Descrizione di Paolo Silenziario (Roma: Viella, 2005), 158–161.
- 3 This iconography showing the blessing of God towards the emperors probably later developed in the imperial coronation scenes. André Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1971), 113; recently Andrea Torno Ginnasi, *L'incoronazione celeste nel mondo bizantino. Politica, cerimoniale, numismatica e arti figurative* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014).
 - 4 It may also have been a way to honor the deceased empress.
 - 5 Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, 26–30; see also Ioannis Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 251–253.
 - 6 For the sacrality of the palace that derived from the sacrality of the imperial basilica: *Codex Theodosianus*, I.1.5, VI.30 and 35, VII.4.35, XIII.3.16 and 19, XIII.5.14. In *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, Vol. I.2, Mommsen, Meyer, eds. (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2011), 28, 303–307, 323, 551, 744, 745, 751 laws of the years 429, 413, 423, 414, 428, 371. See also Maria Cristina Carile, *The Vision of the Palace of the Byzantine Emperors as a Heavenly Jerusalem* (Spoleto: CISAM. Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012).
 - 7 *Tractatus aedificationis et constructionis ecclesiae Sancti Iohannis Evangelistae de Ravenna*, Lodovico Antonio Muratori, ed. (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, I.2) (Milano: Societas Palatina in Regia Curia, 1725), 567–574, includes a thirteenth-century treatise on the construction and dedication of the basilica in two sermons: A. *In dedicatione ecclesiae Sancti Iohannis Evangelistae*; B. *Item de dedicatione ecclesiae Sancti Iohannis Evangelistae* and its shortened version by Rinaldo da Concorregio (fourteenth century); Girolamo Rossi, *Historiarum Ravennatum libri decem*, 2nd ed. (Venetiis: ex Typographia Guerraea, 1589), 101–103; Italian translation in Mario Pierpaoli, *Girolamo Rossi, Storie ravennati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1996). Mention of the mosaics is also found in: Leandro Alberti, *Descrittione di tutta l'Italia, et isole pertinenti ad essa* (Venetia: Paolo Ugolino, 1596), 303r. All these sources have been thoroughly discussed in: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, Vol. II.1, *Kommentar* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974), 94–124 and Alba Maria Orselli, "Tradizioni di culto di san Giovanni apostolo tra Efeso, Costantinopoli e Ravenna." In *Atti dell'VIII Simposio di Efeso su S. Giovanni Apostolo*. ed. Luigi Padovese (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano, 2001), 187–200 reprinted in Eadem, *Basileusa Polis – Regia Civitas. Studi sul tardoantico cristiano*. Luigi Canetti, et al. eds. (Spoleto: CISAM, 2015), 175–191.
 - 8 Corrado Ricci, *Monumenti: tavole storiche dei mosaici di Ravenna*, Vol. 8, *S. Giovanni Evangelista* (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1937), 36, fig. 71; Giuseppe Bovini, "Mosaici parietali scomparsi degli antichi edifici sacri di Ravenna." *Felix Ravenna* 17 (1955), 54–76 and 18 (1955), 5–20; Raffaella Farioli, "Ravenna paleocristiana scomparsa." *Felix Ravenna* 32 (1961), 5–88 in particular 44–50; Liliana Scevola, "La Basilica di S. Giovanni Evangelista a Ravenna." *Felix Ravenna* 36 (1963), 5–105; Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, Vol. II.1, 114; Piero Piccinini, "Immagini d'autorità a Ravenna." In *Storia di Ravenna*, II.2, *Dall'età bizantina all'età ottoniana. Ecclesiologia, cultura e arte*. Antonio Carile ed. (Venezia: Marsilio, 1992), 31–78. Most recently: Angela Amici, "Imperatori Divi nella decorazione musiva della chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista." *Ravenna Studi e Ricerche* 7, no. 1 (2000), 13–57; Davide Longhi, "La raffigurazione musiva di un vescovo *angeloptes* in S. Giovanni Evangelista a Ravenna e l'istituzione della Metropoli ravennate." *Felix Ravenna* 149–152 (1995/1996), 7–38; Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 67–69; Clementina Rizzardi, *Il mosaico a Ravenna: ideologia e arte* (Bologna: Ante Quem, 2011), 55–61;

- Cesare Fiori and Eliana Tozzola, *San Giovanni Evangelista a Ravenna: storia di una chiesa, di mosaici perduti e di mosaici ritrovati* (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 2014), 31–41; Clementina Rizzardi, “Galla Placidia e il suo tempo attraverso la documentazione monumentale e iconografica.” In *Potere e politica nell’età della famiglia teodosiana (395–455). I linguaggi dell’impero, le identità dei barbari*. Isabella Baldini and Salvatore Cosentino, eds. (Bari: Edipuglia, 2013), 195–218; Simon Malmberg, “Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna and Rome.” In *Using Images in Late Antiquity*. Stine Birk, et al. eds. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 150–189. Further discussion centered around the architectural setting of the original apse – and particularly on the original presence of three or seven windows in relation to the mosaic program: Eugenio Russo, *L’architettura di Ravenna paleocristiana* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2003), 41 and n. 155.
- 9 Rossi, *Historiarum Ravennatum libri decem*, 101–102.
 - 10 For a generic dating after 426: Russo, *L’architettura di Ravenna paleocristiana*, 23 and n. 90. For the dedication of the church in 433: Giorgio Orioli, “La data della dedicazione della basilica di San Giovanni Evangelista di Ravenna.” *Ravenna Studi e Ricerche* 6 no. 2 (1999), 209–212, esp. 210; discussing this theory and proposing the year 428, Davide Longhi, “Epigrafi votive di epoca placidiana in S. Giovanni Evangelista a Ravenna e in S. Croce di Gerusalemme a Roma.” *Felix Ravenna* 149–152 (1995/1996), 39–70 esp. 62–63; for discussion on the dedication date, which cannot be later than 437: Leslie Brubaker, “Memories of Helena: Patterns of Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries.” In *Women, Men and Eunuchs. Gender in Byzantium*. Liz James, ed. (New York, London: Routledge, 1997), 52–75, esp. 54 and 67 n. 17.
 - 11 There is no general consensus among scholars about whether or not Theodosius II and Eudokia also had a son named Arcadius. For discussion, see Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1982), 178 n. 14. For the identification of Eudoxia and the meaning of the whole mosaic: Brubaker, “Memories of Helena: Patterns of Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries.”
 - 12 The figures portrayed were Constantine I, Theodosius I, Honorius, Arcadius, and the *nobilissimus puer* Theodosius, the latter being the deceased first son of Galla Placidia (on the right); Valentinian I, Gratian, Constantius III, and the *nobilissimi pueri* Gratian and John, both sons of Theodosius I (on the left) (Malmberg, “Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna and Rome,” 175, with references). Thus, the medallions included only orthodox emperors (*Divi*) and imperial heirs who died at an early age (*nobilissimi pueri*) (Amici, “Imperatori Divi nella decorazione musiva della chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista”), omitting all the pagan, Arian, and suicide emperors of the Constantinian and Valentinian dynasties (Piccinini, “Immagini d’autorità a Ravenna,” 32–33; Malmberg, “Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna and Rome,” 175).
 - 13 The majority of scholars assume that the sea storm happened during the return trip of Galla Placidia and her children from Constantinople in 425. However, with reference to Socrates (*Historia Ecclesiastica*. 7.23. Günther Christian Hansen, ed. [*Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Neue Folge* 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960)], 370–372), the sea storm took place during their trip to Constantinople. For discussion: Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, Vol. II.1, 94 and Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 63, 327 n. 131.
 - 14 Ravenna, Biblioteca Classense Cod. 406, f. 11v.
 - 15 It should be noted that the two saintly figures dress in the same color garments, a tunic and a *chlamys*. Indeed, they seem to represent the St. John during two different times of the navigation, the saint steering the helm and again trimming the sails.

- 16 Marco Bonino, *Archeologia e tradizione navale tra la Romagna e il Po* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1978), 49.
- 17 At the center of the apse a dedicatory inscription reminded the viewer of the empress' vow to the saint: "*Sanctissimo, ac beatissimo Apostolo Ioanni Evangelistae, Galla Placidia Augusta cum suo filio Placido Valentiniano Augusto, et filia sua Iusta Grata Honoria Augusta, liberationis maris votum solvit*" (Rossi, *Historiarum Ravennatum Libri Decem*, 101 = *CIL* 11.276 = *ILS* 818 = *ILCV* 20); English translation: "To the holy and most blessed apostle John the Evangelist the empress Galla Placidia with her son Emperor Placidus Valentinian and her daughter Empress Grata Honoria fulfil their vow for their deliverance from danger at sea" (Malmberg, "Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna and Rome," 174). Galla Placidia's vow was also cited in another inscription on the wall above the triumphal arch and in connection to both the marine scenes and the imperial portraits located there: "*Galla Placidia pro se et his omnibus hoc votum solvit*" (Rossi, *Historiarum Ravennatum libri decem* 101 = *CIL* 11.276b = *ILS* 818,2 = *ILCV* 20b); English translation: "Galla Placidia fulfills her vow on behalf of herself and all of these" (Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 67). For discussion of the inscriptions: Amici, "Imperatori Divi nella decorazione musiva della chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista"; Davide Longhi, "Epigrafi votive di epoca placidiana in S. Giovanni Evangelista a Ravenna e in S. Croce di Gerusalemme a Roma"; see also Vincenza Zangara, "Una predicazione alla presenza dei orincipi: la Chiesa di Ravenna nella prima metà del sec. V." *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000), 265–304, in particular 281–282.
- 18 Rossi, *Historiarum Ravennatum libri decem*, 101. This scene was connected to another inscription (*CIL* 11.276b = *ILS* 818,2 = *ILCV* 20b) celebrating the saint and his relationship to Christ in an apocalyptic context. For the inscription: Amici, "Imperatori Divi nella decorazione musiva della chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista," 30.
- 19 See note 18.
- 20 For this inscription *CIL* 11.276g = *ILCV* 20g drawn from Psalm 68: 29–30 (according to the Byzantine tradition Psalm 67: 29–30): Amici, "Imperatori Divi nella decorazione musiva della chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista," 32.
- 21 For Theodosius II's cross at Jerusalem: Anatole Frolow, *La relique de la Vraie Croix: recherches sur le développement d'un culte* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1961), 84–85, 161–165; Christine Milner, "*Lignum Vitae or Crux Gemmata?* The Cross on Golgotha in the Early Byzantine Period." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20, no. 1 (1996), 77–99; Cyril Mango, "A Fake Inscription of the Empress Eudocia and Pulcheria's Relic of Saint Stephen." *Néa Póμνη* 1 (2004), 23–34 esp. 29–32. For Galla Placidia's donation to Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, which was accompanied by the setting of a mosaic: Richard Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae: le basiliche cristiane antiche di Roma (Sec. IV–IX)*. Vol. I. (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1937), 168 (reporting the text of the commemorative inscription *ILS* 817 = *ICUR* II.22, 435 n. 107 = *ILCV* 1775); Brubaker, "Memories of Helena: Patterns of Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," 61; Longhi, "Epigrafi votive di epoca placidiana in S. Giovanni Evangelista a Ravenna e in S. Croce di Gerusalemme a Roma." See also Hagith Sivan, *Galla Placidia. The Last Roman Empress* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 117.
- 22 Agnellus. *Liber Pontificalis*. 27 (*De sancto Petro*). Mauskopf Delyannis, ed., 174; English translation in Agnellus of Ravenna, *The Book of Pontiffs*, 124. Discussing the identification of the bishop in this latter image: Longhi, "La raffigurazione musiva di un vescovo *angeloptes* in S. Giovanni Evangelista a Ravenna e l'istituzione della metropoli ravennate."
- 23 For the cosmological value of the roundel: Hans Peter L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas

- Brothers, 1982), 90–102. For the portrait in the roundel as a symbol the immanent presence of an entity: André Grabar, *Christian Iconography. A Study of Its Origins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 73–79; see also Cornelius C. Vermeule, “A Greek Theme and Its Survivals: The Ruler’s Shield (Tondo Image) in Tomb and Temple.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 109, no. 6 (1965), 361–397; Martin Lechner, “Imago Clipeata.” *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*, Vol. 3 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1978), 353–369.
- 24 A further example was probably inserted on the western wall of the central nave at the basilica of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo. The iconography of the wall decoration is unknown and only an imperial portrait survives: the figure is traditionally identified either with Theoderic the Great (493–526) or with Justinian (527–565). For discussion: Isabella Baldini, “Il ritratto musivo nella facciata interna di S. Apollinare Nuovo a Ravenna.” In *Atti del VI colloquio dell’Associazione Italiana per lo Studio e la Conservazione del Mosaico (Venezia, 20–23 Gennaio 1999)*. Federico Guidobaldi and Andrea Paribeni, eds. (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 2000), 463–478; Arthur Urbano, “Donation, Dedication, and Damnatio Memoriae: The Catholic Reconciliation of Ravenna and the Church of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, no. 1 (2005), 71–110.
 - 25 The bishop’s face was remade sometime before the inauguration of the mosaic in 548–549: hence, the mosaic might have been originally intended to depict Victor, Maximian’s predecessor on the archbishopric seat between 538 and 545. Irina Andreescu Treadgold, “Materiali, iconografia e committenza nel mosaico ravennate.” In *Storia di Ravenna, II.2, Dall’età bizantina all’età ottoniana: Ecclesiologia, cultura e arte*. Antonio Carile, ed. (Venezia: Marsilio, 1992), 189–208; Eadem and Warren Treadgold, “Procopius and the Imperial Panels of S. Vitale.” *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (1997), 708–723.
 - 26 Charles Barber, “The Imperial Panels at San Vitale: A Reconsideration.” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 14, no. 1 (1990), 19–43; Natalia Teteriatnikov, “Gender and Ritual: Mosaic Panels of Justinian and Theodora in San Vitale.” In *Anathemata Eortika: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews*. Joseph D. Alcherms, Helen C. Evans, and Thelma K. Thomas, eds. (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2009), 296–304.
 - 27 For a donation scene: *ibid.*; Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, Vol. II.2, *Kommentar* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976), 180–181. For the representation of the First Entrance: Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, 146–147; Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1975), 30–31; Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture: From the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Farnham, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 78–80.
 - 28 For a recent reflection on the gift-giving meaning of the mosaic: Diliana N. Angelova, *Sacred Founders: Women, Men, and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding, Rome Through Early Byzantium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 261–276. For imperial gift giving: Leslie Brubaker, “Gifts and Prayers: The Visualization of Gift Giving in Byzantium and the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia.” In *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2010), 33–61; Jean-Pierre Caillet, “L’évolution de la notion d’evergétisme dans l’antiquité chrétienne.” In *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin: Actes du Colloque International de l’Université de Fribourg (13–15 Mars 2008)*. Jean-Michel Spieser and Elisabeth Yota, eds. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2012), 11–24.
 - 29 Antonio Carile, “Produzione e usi della porpora nell’impero bizantino.” In *La porpora. Realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico: Atti del convegno interdisciplinare di studio dell’Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti (Venezia 24–25 Ottobre 1996)*. Oddone Longo, ed. (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti, 1998), 243–269.

- 30 A portrait was always a tribute to a living or a dead person: Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 25–26.
- 31 Scholars have long discussed the event commemorated in this mosaic, propending for the granting either of the autocephaly to the Church of Ravenna by Constans II (641–668) (Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, Vol. II.1, 273–280) or of tax concessions to Bishop Reparatus by the Constantine IV. In recent years, the scholarly opinion has indicated this latter event as the one celebrated in the mosaic. For the historical circumstances surrounding the tax concession: Santo Mazzarino, “Da Lollianus et Arbetio al mosaico storico di S: Apollinare in Classe (note sulla tradizione culturale di Ravenna e sull’anonimo ravennate).” *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 2–3 (12–13) (1965/1966), 99–117; André Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance dans l’empire byzantin au VIIe siècle : L’exemple de l’exarchat et de la Pentapole d’Italie* (Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1969), 176–179; Thomas S. Brown, “The Church of Ravenna and the Imperial Administration in the Seventh Century.” *The English Historical Review* 94, no. 370 (1979), 1–28; Jadran Ferluga, “L’esarcato.” In *Storia di Ravenna*, Vol. II.1, *Dall’età bizantina all’età ottoniana. Territorio, economia e società*. Antonio Carile, ed. (Venezia: Marsilio, 1991), 351–377; most recently, see Salvatore Cosentino, “Social Instability and Economic Decline of the Ostrogothic Community in the Aftermath of the Imperial Victory: The Papyri Evidence.” In *Ravenna: Its Role in Earlier Medieval Change and Exchange*. Judith Herrin and Jinty Nelson, eds. (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016), 133–149; and Veronica Ortenberg West-Harling, “The Church of Ravenna, Constantinople and Rome in the Seventh Century.” In *Ravenna: Its Role in Earlier Medieval Change and Exchange*. Judith Herrin and Jinty Nelson, eds. (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016), 199–210.
- 32 In particular, portraits and inscriptions appear all reworked, and the figure on the emperor’s right and the last two clerics were almost totally remade. For the restorations, the chronology of which is still unknown: Anna Maria Iannucci, “I vescovi Ecclesius, Severus, Ursus, Ursicinus, le scene dei privilegi e dei sacrifici in S. Apollinare in Classe.” *Corsi di Cultura sull’Arte Ravennate e Bizantina* 33 (1986), 165–193.
- 33 The first figure on the left, holding the miniature of a ciborium, has been tentatively identified as the future Justinian II. Corrado Ricci, *Monumenti: Tavole storiche dei mosaici di Ravenna*, Vol. 7, *S. Apollinare in Classe* (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1935), 34.
- 34 Maria Cristina Carile, “Production, Promotion and Reception: The Visual Culture of Ravenna between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.” In *Ravenna: Its Role in Earlier Medieval Change and Exchange*. Judith Herrin and Jinty Nelson, eds. (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016), 53–86, in particular 72–75, with references.
- 35 *De sacri aedibus Deiparae ad Fontem*, in *Acta Sanctorum. Novembris*, Vol. 3, Carlo De Smedt, ed. (Bruxelles: Polleunis, Ceuterick et Lefebure, 1900), 880C; English translation in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453. Sources and Documents*, 155.
- 36 The church was built by Justinian, but Procopius does not describe it in detail. Procopius, *De Aedificiis*. I.3.6–9. Gerhard Wirth, ed. and Henry Bronson Dewing, trans. (Cambridge and London: Loeb Classical Library, 1940), 40–41. For the changes that occurred to the building over the centuries: Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’empire byzantin*, Vol. III.1, *Les églises et les monastères, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969), 232–237.
- 37 For imperial donations to churches, with reference to the *De Cerimoniis*: André Grabar, “Quel est le sens de l’offrande de Justinien et de Théodora sur les mosaïques de Saint-Vital?” *Felix Ravenna* 81 (1960), 63–77; see also John Philip Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks,

- 1987), 153–154, 216–217; Natalia Teteriatnikov, “Hagia Sophia: The Two Portraits of the Emperors with Money Bags as a Functional Setting.” *Arte Medievale* 1 (1996), 46–67 esp. 48–49.
- 38 This text is included in a tenth-century manuscript of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (ms. gr. 1447, ff. 257–258). For the edition and French translation: Antoine Wenger, “Notes inédites sur les empereurs Théodose I, Arcadius, Théodose II, Léon I.” *Revue Des Études Byzantines* 10, no. 1 (1952), 47–59 esp. 54–59; English translation in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453. Sources and Documents*, 34–35. On the proximity of relics and icons in framing sacred space, see also chapters by Lidova, Milanović, and Bogdanović in this volume.
- 39 The text reports Veronica instead of Verina and describes the young Leo and Ariadne as the children of the imperial family. However, Leo was in fact son of Zeno and Ariadne and thus Leo and Verina’s grandson (Ivi, 35 n. 57). For the Blachernae church: Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’empire byzantin*, Vol. III.1, 169–179; Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls: Byzantion, Konstantinupolis, Istanbul bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: E. Wasmuth, 1977), 223–224, 301–305.
- 40 Discussing this point: Cyril Mango, “The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople.” In *Radovi XIII međunarodnog kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju (Split, Poreč 25.9–1.10. 1994)/Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae*. Nenad Cambi and Emilio Marin, eds. (Split, Roma: Arheoloski Muzej – Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1998), 61–76; Idem, “Constantinople as Theotokoupolis.” In *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*. Maria Vassilaki, ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 17–25; Bissera Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 11–13; for the cult of the Theotokos in relation to the veil: Henry Maguire, “Body, Clothing, Metaphor: The Virgin in Early Byzantine Art.” In *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*. Leslie Brubaker and Mary B. Cunningham, eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 39–52.
- 41 Jelena Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 42 Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*.
- 43 Cyril Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (København: Munksgaard, 1959), 69–70, 90–91; Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, 93–94. Underlying the importance of the panel proximity to the door that was also leading to the Holy Well on the ground floor: Teteriatnikov, “Hagia Sophia: The Two Portraits of the Emperors with Money Bags as a Functional Setting,” 52–54.
- 44 Thomas Whittemore, *The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, Vol. 3, *Third Preliminary Report, Work Done in 1935–1938: The Imperial Portraits of the Southern Vestibule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Byzantine Institute, 1942); Nicolas Oikonomides, “The Mosaic Panel of Constantine IX and Zoe in Saint Sophia.” *Revue des Études Byzantines* 36 (1978), 219–232; Robin Cormack, “Interpreting the Mosaics of Saint Sophia at Istanbul.” *Art History* 4 (1981), 131–149; see also Idem, “The Emperor at St. Sophia: Viewer and Viewed.” In *Byzance et les images: Cycle de conférences organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service Culturel du 5 Octobre au 7 Décembre 1992*. André Guillou and Jannic Durand, eds. (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1994), 225–293, esp. 240–243; Ioli Kalavrezou, “Irregular Marriages in the Eleventh Century and the Zoe and Constantine Mosaic in Hagia Sophia.” In *Law and Society in Byzantium, 9th–12th Centuries*. Angeliki E. Laiou and Simon Dieter, eds. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994), 241–260; Brian A. Pollack, “Sex, Lies, and Mosaics: The Zoe Panel as a Reflection of Change in Eleventh-Century Byzantium.” *ARTiculate* 1, no. 1 (2012), 22–38; Teteriatnikov, “Hagia Sophia: The Two Portraits of the Emperors with Money Bags as a Functional Setting.”

- 45 For the *apokombion*, the usual imperial donation on major feast days or on Holy Saturday, see Alexander Kazhdan, "Apokombion." In *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Vol. 3. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 135–136. The inscription on Zoe's roll (+ Κωνσταντ(ι)νο(ς) ἐν Χ(ριστῷ) τῷ Θε(ε)ῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων / "Constantine, pious in Christ the God, Emperor of the Romans") was adopted for tax concessions or donations. For a discussion and an analysis of the imperial donations to the church by Romanos III and Constantine IX: Oikonomides, "The Mosaic Panel of Constantine IX and Zoe in Saint Sophia," 223–224.
- 46 For this point as well as for Zoe's concern with beauty, see especially Myrto Hatzaki, "Experiencing Physical Beauty in Byzantium: The Body and the Ideal." In *Experiencing Byzantium. Papers from the 44th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies (Newcastle and Durham, April 2011)*. Claire Nesbitt and Mark Jackson, eds. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 233–250. See also Barbara Hill, Liz James, and Dion Smythe, "Zoe: The Rhythm Method of Imperial Renewal." In *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries. Papers from the Twenty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies (St Andrews, March 1992)*. Paul Magdalino, ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 215–229.
- 47 Leslie Brubaker also notes that the mosaic, lit by candles and oil lamps, would have been well visible also by those entering from the imperial door at the ground level. Brubaker, "Gifts and Prayers: The Visualization of Gift Giving in Byzantium and the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia," 37–39; Eadem, "Looking at the Byzantine Family." In *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*. Eadem and Shaun Tougher, eds. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 177–206, especially 192. For further reflections on the viewers: Cormack, "The Emperor at St. Sophia: Viewer and Viewed."
- 48 For this mosaic: Whittemore, *The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Imperial Portraits of the Southern Vestibule*; Cormack, "The Emperor at St. Sophia: Viewer and Viewed"; Idem, "Interpreting the Mosaics of Saint Sophia at Istanbul"; Ioli Kalavrezou, "Imperial Relations with the Church in the Art of the Komnenians." In *Byzantium in the 12th Century: Canon Law, State and Society*. Nicolas Oikonomides, ed. (Athens: Society of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 1991), 25–36, esp. 33–34.
- 49 Teteriatnikov, "Hagia Sophia: The Two Portraits of the Emperors with Moneybags as a Functional Setting"; Eadem, "Animated Icons on Interactive Display: The Case of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople." In *Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*. Alexei Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 247–274.
- 50 On this point: Oikonomides, "The Mosaic Panel of Constantine IX and Zoe in Saint Sophia"; Teteriatnikov, "Hagia Sophia: The Two Portraits of the Emperors with Money Bags as a Functional Setting," 49–52.
- 51 For Theodora: Linda Garland, *Byzantine Empresses. Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 11–39; Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001). For Irene: Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204*, 73–94; James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*; Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple. Rulers of Medieval Byzantium* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), 51–129.
- 52 The church was built between 965 and 969 during the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969). The niche showed the young Empress Theophano and Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas in the center, the young Basil to the right, the emperor's father Bardas and his brother the *kuropalates* Leo Phokas. The inscription over the fresco reads: "Lord preserve at all time our pious Majesties, Nikephoros and Theophano our lady." For the church: Nicole Thierry, *La Cappadoce de l'antiquité au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 73–74, 173–177, with references.
- 53 Furthermore, they were visually paralleled to the representation of Saint Constantine and Helena in the central apse. Catherine Jolivet-Levy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1991), 18–19; Maria Parani, *Reconstructing the*

- Reality of Images. Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries)* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2003), 40, 105–106. See also with further reflections: Catherine Jolivet-Levy, “L’image du pouvoir dans l’art byzantin à l’époque de la dynastie macédonienne (867–1056).” *Byzantion* 57 (1987), 441–470.
- 54 Suggesting that the fresco may have commemorated an imperial donation: Teteriatnikov, “Hagia Sophia: The Two Portraits of the Emperors with Money Bags as a Functional Setting,” 48–49.
- 55 On the imperial palace: Carile, *The Vision of the Palace of the Byzantine Emperors as a Heavenly Jerusalem* (with particular reference to Late Antiquity); Michael Featherstone, “Space and Ceremony in the Great Palace of Constantinople Under the Macedonian Emperors.” In *Le corti nell’alto Medioevo. LXII Settimana di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo (Spoleto, 24–29 Aprile 2014)* (Spoleto: CISAM. Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 2015), 587–608 (for mid-Byzantium); Ruth Macrides, “After the Macedonians: Ceremonial and Space in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.” In *Le corti nell’alto Medioevo. LXII Settimana di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo (Spoleto, 24–29 Aprile 2014)* (Spoleto: CISAM. Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 2015), 611–624 (for late Byzantium). With reference to imperial palaces in a long perspective, most recently: Michael Featherstone et al., eds., *The Emperor’s House. Palaces from Augustus to the Age of Absolutism* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015).
- 56 Eusebius. *Vita Constantini*. III.3. In *Eusebius von Caesarea. De vita Constantini. Über das Leben Konstantins*. Bruno Bleckmann, ed. H. Schneider, commentary (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 310–313; English translation in *Eusebius, Life of Constantine*. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, introduction, translation, and commentary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 122.
- 57 On the *Chalké*: Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*. It is not clear if the palace entrance was already the *Chalké* at the time of Constantine or if this monumental entrance was built only around 498, under Emperor Anastasius (491–518). Albrecht Berger, “Die Altstadt von Byzanz in der vorjustinianischen Zeit.” In *Varia II* [Poikila Byzantina 6]. Idem, ed. (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1987), 8–30 in particular 11–12; Idem, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinopoleos* [Poikila Byzantina 7] (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1988), 243; Malmberg, “Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna and Rome,” 150–156. For the remains identified as the *Chalké*: Asuman Denker, “Excavations at the Byzantine Great Palace (Palatium Magnum) in the Area of the Old Sultanahmet Jail.” In *The Byzantine Court: Source of Power and Culture. Papers from the Second International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium (Istanbul, 21–23 June 2010)*. Ayla Ödekan, Nevra Necipoğlu, and Engin Akyürek, eds. (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2013), 13–18, esp. 13–15.
- 58 For the palace as the core of the imperial administration and the symbol of the imperial power: Judith Herrin, “Byzance: le palais et la ville.” *Byzantion* 61 (1991), 213–230; Marie-France Auzepy and Joël Cornette, “Lieux de pouvoir, pouvoir des lieux.” In *Palais et pouvoir de Constantinople à Versailles*. Eadem, eds. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2003), 5–31.
- 59 This is reported into a letter of Patriarch Germanus to Thomas of Claudiopolis in the 730s: Germanus, *Epistola ad Thomam*. In *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 98. Jacques Paul Migne, ed. Paris: L. Migne, 1865, 186A. For discussion and references: Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium and the Iconoclast Era (c. 680–850): A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 103–104, 128. Although this depiction probably did not include the imperial portraits, it was accompanied by an inscription connecting the emperors to the image.
- 60 For the much debated problem of the existence of a portrait of Christ on the *Chalké* before 726, its possible replacement by a cross that purportedly gave rise to iconoclasm, and the setting of other Christian images by following emperors: Marie-France

- Auzépy, "La destruction de l'icône du Christ de la Chalkè de Léon III: propagande ou réalité?" *Byzantion* 60 (1990), 445–492; Leslie Brubaker, "The Chalke Gate, the Construction of the Past, and the Trier Ivory." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999), 258–285; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium and the Iconoclast Era (c. 680–850): A History*, 128–135. On the role of the *Chalkè* for iconoclast emperors: Marie-France Auzépy, "The Great Palace and the Iconoclast Emperors." In *The Byzantine Court: Source of Power and Culture. Papers from the Second International Sevri Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium (Istanbul, 21–23 June 2010)*. Ayla Ödekan, Nevra Necipoğlu, and Engin Akýürek, eds. (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2013), 73–78.
- 61 The eighth-century *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* locate the statuary group of Maurice and his wife and children, of Ariadne and Zeno and of Pulcheria at the *Chalkè* (*Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, 5b, 32–33, 80. In *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*. Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin, introduction, translation and commentary (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 62–63, 94–95, 159, 207–209). Elaborating on these passages and adding a group with the whole family of Theodosius the Great is the tenth-century *Patria Konstantinoupoleos*, 2. 28. In *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: The Patria*. Theodore Preger, ed. A. Berger, English translation. (Cambridge and London: Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 2013), 69.
- 62 The *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* report of a statue of Constantine and Helena and a gilded statue of Sophia (wife of Justin II) with her daughter and niece at the *Milion*; a statue of Constantine, his sons and Licinius, which was later replaced by a statuary group with Theodosius and his sons at the *Augusteon* (*Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, 34–35, 68. Cameron and Herrin, trans. and comm., 94–95, 148–149, 207–209, 262–263). For the statuary on and around the *Chalkè*: Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*, 99–107; Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos*, 247–248; Franz Alto Bauer, *Stadt, Platz und Denkmal in der spätantike. Untersuchungen zur Ausstattung des Öffentlichen Raums in den spätantiken Städten Rom, Konstantinopel und Ephesos* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1996), 165; Brubaker, "The Chalke Gate, the Construction of the Past, and the Trier Ivory," 265.
- 63 Procopius. *De aedificiis*. I.10.15–18. Wirth, ed. Dewing, trans., 85–87.
- 64 Karl Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven." *The Art Bulletin* 27, no. 1 (1945), 1–27; Edward Baldwin Smith, *The Dome. A Study in the History of Ideas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978) (1st ed. 1950); see also Louis Hautecoeur, *Mystique et architecture: Symbolisme du cercle et de la coupole* (Paris: Picard, 1954).
- 65 Describing an image of the imperial couple set in the palace of Placidia, the sixth-century writer Agathias defines the emperors as the "θεσπεσίη συνωρίς" (Agathias Scholasticus, *Εἰς εἰκόνα ἀνατεθεῖσαν ἐν τοῖς Πλακιδίας ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ νέου σκρινίον*. In *Greek Anthology*. 16.41. William Roger Paton, English translation. (Cambridge and London: Loeb Classical Library, 1916), Vol. 5, 182–183).
- 66 Merobaudes. *Carmina*. II. In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores antiquissimi*, Vol. 14. Friedrich Vollmer, ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905), 3; English translation in Frank M. Clover, "Flavius Merobaudes: A Translation and Historical Commentary." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 61, no. 1 (1971), 1–78, esp. 11.
- 67 This composition has been attributed to the years around 443 on the occasion of the baptism of Placidia (Valentinian and Eudoxia's second daughter) and interpreted as a description of the palace *ad Laureta* in Ravenna. Mario Mazza, *Le maschere del potere: cultura e politica nella tarda antichità* (Napoli: Jovene, 1986), 176–188, with a thorough historical and literary analysis; see also Timothy David Barnes, "Merobaudes on the Imperial Family." *Phoenix* 28, no. 3 (1974), 314–319.
- 68 Merobaudes. *Carmina*. II. ed. F. Vollmer, in *MGH. Auctores Antiquissimi*, 14:3; English trans. Clover, "Flavius Merobaudes: A Translation and Historical Commentary," 11. Recently on the imperial palace at Ravenna: Judith Herrin, "The Imperial Palace of Ravenna." In *The Emperor's House. Palaces from Augustus to the Age of*

- Absolutism*. Michael Featherstone, Jean-Michel Spieser and Gülru Tamnan, eds. (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 53–62, with references and discussion.
- 69 With reference to Byzantium: Simon Malmberg, “Visualizing Hierarchy at Imperial Banquets.” In *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium* (Byzantina Australiensia 5). Wendy Mayer and Silke Trzcionka, eds. (Brisbane: Watson Ferguson & Company, 2005), 11–24.
 - 70 For the much debated existence of an imperial palace at Aquileia: Claire Sotinel, *Identité civique et Christianisme: Aquilée du IIIe au VIe siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2005), 17–24, with discussion.
 - 71 *Panegyrici Latini*. VI.6.2. In *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici latini*. Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, Latin text. C.E.V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, introduction, translation, and historical commentary (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1994), 298–199.
 - 72 The date should be 31 March 307. See commentary in *ibid.* 179–185.
 - 73 *Vita Basilii* 89; ed. and English trans. I. Ševčenko (Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, 2011), 289–295. The bedchamber was located within the premises of the *kainourgion*, one of the constructions built by Basil in the palace. For the *kainourgion*: Raymond Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris: Institut Français d’Études Byzantines, 1964), 115–116.
 - 74 On this passage with reference to the role of the children: Cecily Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 144–145. For the political concerns behind this images: Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 49–50. For the meaning of the mosaic program: Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium. Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 156–157, 170–171.
 - 75 *Vita Basilii*. 89. ed. I. Ševčenko, 292–295.
 - 76 The political content of this comparison has been emphasized by Leslie Brubaker, “Looking at the Byzantine Family,” 191–192; see also Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre. Étude sur le césaropapisme byzantin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 206; Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium*, 156–157, 162, 170–171.
 - 77 For the semi-private character of the *kainourgion*: Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium*, 145.
 - 78 For the text, English translation and commentary: Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson, “The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century.” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982), 123–183, esp. 126–130.
 - 79 See the in-depth commentary in *ibid.*
 - 80 This is clearly stated by Procopius (Procopius. *De aedificiis*. I.10.15; Wirth, ed., and Dewing, trans., 84–85) and emphasized in the Theodosian Code, where imperial images (*statuae vel imagines*) are called *ornamentum*, implying their glorifying power (*Codex Theodosianus* XV.4.1. In *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, Vol. I.2. Theodor Mommsen, Paul M. Meyer, eds. Berlin: Woodmann, 1904, 818, law issued by Theodosius II and Valentinian III in 425).
 - 81 Since producing a portrait was considered a means to glorify one person. See note 31.
 - 82 On the value of the emperor shown in his imperial garments as bearer of the official image of the state: Maria Cristina Carile, “Imperial Icons in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: The Iconic Image of the Emperor Between Representation and Presence.” *Ikon* 9 (2016), 75–98.
 - 83 On this point: Holum, *Theodosian Empresses. Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*; Brubaker, “Memories of Helena: Patterns of Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries”; see also Judith Herrin, “The Imperial Feminine in Byzantium.” *Past and Present* 169, no. 1 (2000), 3–35 reprinted in Eadem, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 161–193; James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*.

4 The influence of icons on the perception of living holy persons

Katherine Marsengill

In countless Byzantine hagiographic and theological sources, we read that painted icons were believed to be true portraits;¹ indeed, that it was necessary that they be so, even though to our eyes the appearances of Christ and the saints are sometimes quite unnaturally stylized. What a modern viewer lacks, however, is a Byzantine eye – a perception of the human body and its characteristics that is quite different from our own. In the Byzantine world, the true nature of a holy person was revealed not by his earthly appearance, but by his conformity to a sacred type. The Byzantines believed that the consequences of divine revelation in the soul were expressed in the physical aspect of a holy person. Just as Moses shone with the reflected light of God when he descended from Sinai, a man or woman who had accomplished a greater spiritual degree of enlightenment, who had experienced God, simply could not exist without such a state physically and visibly revealed.² There are cases where holiness was kept hidden during life, as attested by the modest Saint Theodora of Thessaloniki. Her body transfigured only at death, and the holiness of this countenance was further revealed in the posthumously painted icon.³ For the most part, however, for those who had achieved spiritual perfection, his or her appearance was believed to have transformed accordingly, an ontological state that was visible in the person and presented in the painted icon, as well, whether done from life or repainted over the centuries.⁴ The icon, then, preserved for viewers this holy visibility as an expression of the true, spiritual nature of man – not his physical materiality, but his transcendent likeness.

How did this understanding of the perceptible effects of holiness as revealed in painted icons, as well as a cultural understanding of what icons conveyed to viewers about the person represented, guide contemporary experiences of encountering living holy persons? In this chapter of *Perceptions of Body and Space*, I would like to discuss the perception of “the holy” as it concerns the holy body and its framing within sacred space in Byzantium. In particular, I would like to examine how painted icons (and icons in other materials) influenced the appearances of living holy persons as they were conceptually framed and visually perceived. This is not a new topic, as Gilbert Dagron approached it in 1991, studying the interdependence of icons and visions of saints.⁵ If Dagron’s article did not discuss living saints, it nonetheless analyzed instances where images were “living” within the minds of those who beheld the visions, as well as in the imaginations of those who read or heard about these visions in miracle accounts where the painted icon

became interpolated as the likeness of the saint. The saints, we are told, were recognized or recognizable because they looked identical to their icons. We can only speculate how such a translation of painting to flesh manifested as “alive” in the minds of contemporaries; the descriptives are never as informative as we may wish them. But certainly traits such as “shining” and “filled with Divine grace” are examples of adjectives (albeit abstract) that are interchangeable, used to describe both a “living” saint – or a vision of him – and his icon. However, as will be discussed here, the conceptual relationship between a living holy person and a painted icon was so closely intertwined that the term “icon” transcended flesh and paint in the Byzantine understanding.

Important to the study of living holy men is Georgia Frank’s *The Memory of the Eyes*. Published in 2000, it presented the phenomenon of late antique visual perception through the lens of pilgrimage accounts and hagiography, which brought everyday people into contact with living holy men.⁶ Frank reexamines what have been overlooked as hagiographic *topoi* in order to ascertain how Byzantines not just described holy men (their faces are shining, radiant, filled with grace, like an angel, etc.), but how they actually *perceived* their appearances; in other words, the circulated stories about how holy persons looked created expectations in pilgrims that were self-fulfilled. Explaining the appearances of humans that were spiritual exemplars required a written and spoken language that cast holy persons as part of a larger truth. *Topoi* revealed the patterns that took shape within the holy person’s life, which, in turn, revealed the presence of the Divine. Thus, people were culturally prepared to see and explain encounters with the holy in conformity to these accepted, visible signs.⁷

Inspired by this hypothesis, I posited how the development of painted icons may have played a role in this discourse.⁸ I have already argued that painted icons developed within a culture that believed holiness wrought visible transformations in human faces, making them into “living icons,” and that painted icons, in turn, became a factor in the perception, description, and, in some cases the self-representation of living holy persons.⁹ In this chapter, I would like to add another layer to the inquiry. This will necessitate a discussion of iconic presence and the conceptual interchangeability of a living and painted icon, as well as theoretical definitions of the image as form rather than substance. In a general sense, viewing living or painted icons involved the element of the aforementioned conditioned expectations that influenced perception, as Frank describes in relation to holy men. However, that the living or painted icon was believed to convey presence, even if seemingly redundant in the case of the living holy person, is a phenomenon that deserves more consideration. For without the conceptual notion of the painted icon, the living icon lacks its fullest meaning.

In this vein, it is necessary to outline a basic issue about images in early and medieval Christianity that is still a matter of scholarly debate. I refer to the “struggle” the Christian viewer has with his inclination to invest in the image a degree of reality that is impossible (and often abruptly stopped short) because of the limitations and physicality of the material. It is a debate over the perceived presence or acknowledged absence of a being in his or her painted image.¹⁰ This is not just a

problem of modern-day thinkers. Ink has been spilled for almost two millennia trying to justify the use of images or discredit them as inhibitive to true spiritual knowledge.¹¹ In favor of their use in Christianity, images have been positioned as picture bibles for the poor¹² – no matter that many images were certainly iconic portraits and not merely narrative – and visible “signs” that point to greater truth that is both concealed and revealed by images.¹³ Or, if images were conceived as material visualizations of spiritual realities (and John of Damascus is merely one representative of this realm of thought), icons were essentially linked to their prototypes, and yet different in expression and material.¹⁴ This departure from other late antique ideas about the inferiority of materiality and visibility was justified by defending that matter had been elevated by the Incarnation.

In the late antique understanding of the function of an icon – reiterated by the Byzantine iconophiles in the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 – the purpose of venerating an image was that the honor conveyed to it was honor paid to a distant and otherwise unseen prototype.¹⁵ A general interpretation is that icons were recognized as a sanctified means for the holy to participate in the physical realm, with the justification that such participation did not confuse the portrayed with his actual portrait and its earth-bound materiality.¹⁶ However, as attested in numerous sources, there remained throughout the centuries stories of images that not only made visible who was represented, a conduit of veneration that promised reciprocation with blessings and perhaps miracles; but that the portrait also somehow became an extension of or even a substitution for the represented figure. The material portrait, not merely who was represented, could become activated, however such miraculous leaps in a particular icon’s potential to act or react came about. For example, an eighth-century account found in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* tells how, at a meeting of bishops, there was an icon of John Chrysostom hung on a board positioned above the throne of the patriarch, Abba Michael.¹⁷ In protest to the removal of a certain Bishop Cyriacus from his office, this icon moved on its own from its original position several times before it finally took up residence near Cyriacus. That Cyriacus resembled Chrysostom’s likeness made the saint’s favor even clearer, a point that implies that the living bishop’s appearance had conformed to an inner state that made it reflective of the sainted bishop. This cultural notion that a person could resemble an icon will be addressed further later in this chapter.

Such accounts reveal the belief that there was a vital connection between the icon and the portrayed, a connection that was explained in various ways. For defenders of icons in the late eighth and ninth centuries, in theoretically refined explanations of their position, this connection was form. The icon became conceptually the material imprint of a form that it shared with the prototype, while remaining essentially different from the absent prototype it conveyed through shared form. As Patriarch Nikephoros states, “Making present the departed by manifesting the resemblance and memory of its shape/form (μορφῆς), [the icon] coextensive over time preserves the relationship [with the archetype].”¹⁸ The iconophiles consistently relied upon two words to designate form, μορφή and εἶδος, and often used them together. The former, in my opinion, is more general and addresses the shape

or appearance of someone, whereas the latter, based on ancient uses of the term, seems to encompass certain moral or spiritual aspects that are manifest in a person's appearance and which can also be pictured in a likeness.¹⁹ I believe this is how St. Athanasius uses the terms in *Contra Arianos*, where he writes, "He therefore who venerates the icon also venerates the emperor in it, for the icon is the shape (μορφή) and the form (εἶδος) of him."²⁰ John of Damascus uses the two words further to describe the accidentals of appearance, perhaps general form and unique physical and moral features.²¹ It may be that Nikephoros employs only the first in the preceding passage to leave room for cases where particulars vary even though form is constant, similar to the answer Patriarch Photios gives about variations in icons between cultures in his defense of icons.²²

Thus, the form – the appearance, generally and specifically – of the prototype existed eternally outside of the boundary of matter, whether or not it was made visible in one portrait or another. Gazing upon the correct form of a person in his or her portrait directed veneration, as the form represented there – if not the material it was represented on – was essentially the same. In a sense, form-made-visible amounted to a sympathetic and metaphysical bond. Every so often, the metaphysical bond became physical and there seemed to be reserved the possibility that the portrait might yet elide with the prototype, or that the prototype's form could somehow inhabit the physicality of the material upon which its form was represented, as was the case with Bishop Cyriacus' icon.

But how does this relationship work in cases where living holy persons are perceived as painted images? The elision of portrait and prototype is an interesting point for a case study examining Saint Neophytos of Cyprus (1134 – after May 1214). Neophytos was a monk who, after a series of events in his life, eventually removed himself from society to live as a hermit in a cave near Paphos, which he called the *enkleistra* [lit. "enclosed"], and where he could study, write, and dedicate himself to God as a true ascetic (Figure 4.1).²³ He transformed his cave by carving out an inner cell as his personal space, a sanctuary for worship (and eventually, when he was anointed as a priest, for the sacraments), and then a *naos* to complete his chapel. Over time, other monk-disciples joined him so that the hermitage became a larger complex with Neophytos residing in the chapel at the center of monastic life.

In her comprehensive study of the saint's life, Galatariotou explains how Neophytos, though working no miracles, positioned himself in his own writings (and presumably in his interactions with followers) as a vehicle of God, chosen by God to be an intermediary between humans and the divine.²⁴ In his old age, while writing his monastery's *typikon* in 1214, he continually professes his own unworthiness (a common rhetorical formula) while stating that all of his actions, life's endeavors, and writings were the will, thoughts, and voice of God; his words as he spoke them to his followers or wrote them in his numerous authored works, were those of the Holy Spirit moving through him: "The words that I say to you . . . are the words that are spoken from divine grace through me to you."²⁵

Not surprisingly, then, is how Neophytos had himself portrayed in his cave cell and in the sanctuary of his cave chapel when he directed its painted decoration in



Figure 4.1 Theodore Apeudes, Neophytos with Angels, 1182, fresco in the bema. Enkleistra of Saint Neophytes, Paphos.

Photo: © Svetlana Tomeković.

1183. I will draw attention to only one example, though he was portrayed in paint twice (and in an additional painting in the *naos* years later, when it was decorated around 1200).²⁶ In the sanctuary, across from the image of the Ascension of Christ, Neophytos appears full-length, held aloft on either side by angels as he, too, ascends to heaven. It is a declaration of his heavenly aspirations, certainly; but also an expression of himself as a holy man: angelic – as hermits historically were described – and existing in a place that was between earth and heaven. He proclaimed his current and future status as one who belonged among the saintly and angelic ranks.

However, despite the boldness of the painted representation, it is not Neophytos' portrait alone that is of interest here. In terms of framing a living holy man with architecture and images,²⁷ one can do no better than Neophytos. His cell was located behind the sanctuary, accessed through a narrow, rectangular door. Above the door is a painting of a full-length image of Christ Emmanuel (though an adult, not a child as is more typical for this type), framed within a door-like background (Figure 4.2). This is no doubt a reference to Christ the Door, even though it bears the inscription "Emmanuel."²⁸ The physical door to Neophytos' cell and the door painted around Christ are practically the same in shape and proportion. The dual presentation of Neophytos as the living icon and the painted icon of Christ above him would have been quite apparent when the ascetic stood within the frame of the door to his cell, and the conception of the saint as a perfect imitator of Christ reinforced: through Neophytos, one could encounter Christ – Neophytos was the door, and his was the living reflection of Christ Emmanuel, Christ "who is with us."



Figure 4.2 Theodore Apsoudes, Christ the Door, 1182, fresco in the bema. Enkleistra of Saint Neophytos, Paphos.

Photo: © Svetlana Tomeković.

Perhaps even more interesting is how Neophytos appeared to his disciples after he retreated to his second cell above the *naos* of the cave church, a place he called the New Zion, sometime around the year 1200. From this superior vantage point, Neophytos attended the services that took place in the chapel below while he remained in a specially designated area he called the *hagiasterion*, watching and listening through an aperture.

Then, the narthex and its upper storey [which is] the sacristy. Again above this, my sanctuary and holy chapel, wherein I am sanctified by partaking of Christ's sacraments and by the chanting of the holy hymns. Again, above the aforementioned sanctuary, [is] the new hermitage of the New Sion, the work abounding in God's providence.²⁹

The opening to the *hagiasterion* is visible in the center of the *naos*, appearing as if an oculus in the cave ceiling, a ceiling which had been rounded in its carving to mimic a shallow dome (Figure 4.3). Moreover, still visible in the "dome," even though badly damaged, is another image of Christ's Ascension that was painted at the same time as Neophytos' "ascension" to his new cell. The composition curves around the shaft of the oculus so that Christ's head rises to a pinnacle within the upper part of the oculus.

From what we can tell, this upper cave is where Neophytos remained until his death, announcing by its location and the adjoining imagery that he had ascended, metaphorically and literally. Similar to the door to his previous cell, it is in the framing of his actual person where we find a visual statement more powerful than



Figure 4.3 View of the oculus in the naos with scene of Christ's Ascension, 1182.

Photo: © Svetlana Tomeković.

any portrait image of the saint. Whereas oculi are traditionally round, this one is not. Nor is it a rectangle, though the outline at the top of the shaft is square. The oculus is not even a roughened shape determined by the nature of the rock itself, nor reflective of the hard work of manual chiseling through the rock. Mango and Hawkins describe it as “elliptical,” though it is clearly not.³⁰ Indeed, for viewers looking upward into the *hagiasterion*, the oculus is distinctly shaped with one side having an arched opening (presumably the top) that terminates on both sides in one straight side (presumably the bottom) so that the effect is one of an arched window, an aedicule, or even arched frame of a holy icon. Only a few of the icons painted on the walls of the *enkleistra* have such arched fields, and these are usually determined by the shape of the rock rather than deliberate. By contrast, the icon of the Virgin and Child at the tomb in Neophytos’ original cell, because it is painted within a niche, stands out as having been specifically created with an arched top. One can imagine how Neophytos addressed his disciples, with his head appearing perfectly framed in the arch as he braced himself on the edge, as if a living, talking icon. Moreover, once again, his living face was paired with a painted image of Christ so that both were visually grasped simultaneously by viewers and, undoubtedly, conceptually related to one another, as well.³¹

It is clear that Neophytos framed his living person within openings that referenced the frames and pictorial fields of icons. To reinforce the comparison, he placed images of Christ near his living person as well as his painted portrait. In this way, we see the perception of Neophytos as though he were an icon not just as something that had cultural precedents with conditioned, even expected responses, as Frank discusses regarding holy men in Late Antiquity. Indeed, this

was also a careful construct on the part of Neophytos, who, though self-educated, was obviously well versed in traditions regarding sainthood and its visualization. It goes without saying that there were visual examples in the icons of his culture for him to use; they were present in his cave chapel. Moreover, there was a legacy of ascetics who were similarly framed and compared to painted icons, notably among the stylite saints. One example is Lazaros of Galesion (d. 1053). Atop his column, Lazaros had constructed an elaborate partition between where he resided (presumably in a covered space away from the eyes of his viewers), and the area where his visitors, after ascending a ladder, would meet with him face-to-face. The partition was pierced by a window-like aperture through which Lazaros and his visitors would speak. A description from his *vita* of such an interaction tells of how one of Lazaros' followers, as monk named Meletius, came up to give a report to Lazaros, sitting on the other side of the partition. Interestingly, the *vita* refers to icons of archangels set up there, as well, perhaps placed on stands or even hung on the partitioning wall, so that Lazaros' own face would have been framed in the window next to painted images of angels.³²

Neophytos also inherited a rich rhetorical legacy in which, since antiquity, images and people were compared as a means of identifying and recognizing innate superior qualities of certain humans. People were often described as images, or in terms of their similarities to images, whether these were real or imagined images. An imaginary image might serve as a means to describe a perfected version of someone, a higher state of being that is made visibly clear as one assumes the qualities of a painted or carved portrait. To take an example commonly used, Ammianus Marcellinus commented on the unmoving dignity of Emperor Constantius II as he rode in his chariot, saying he resembled a graven image,³³ in other words, he was so appropriate and dignified in the moment of his triumph that he became the kind of perfection that is visible in images. In Late Antiquity, it was deemed important that the Christian emperor be viewed as a revelation, even an epiphany, of dispassionate splendor, someone who was above the passions of human nature. The ruler was like a present divinity³⁴ – and therefore like an image, as the emperor was often called.

Late antique Christians, in the process of spiritual perfection were urged to become, interestingly enough, their own metaphorical portraits, or perfected versions of themselves. This was the subject of letters and sermons delivered by Church Fathers like Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom.³⁵ Yet in order to do so, they often needed the portraits of exemplars by which to model their own. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the Christian "self-portrait" is a living person who portrays herself with virtues and good deeds after the likeness of another living or deceased person, who is called a "portrait" (*"eikon"*) to refer to his or her perfected state. The exemplar was usually a saint, who had modeled him or herself after Christ, the icon of the Father. Thus, whether or not an *actual* painted portrait of the virtuous exemplar was kept in the minds or before the eyes during this metaphorical painting by the self-modelers is possible, but unknown.³⁶ As complicated as it sounds, there is substantial enough evidence to suggest that the spiritual exemplar's own portrait – whether actually painted, metaphorical, or

imagined – was greater in its conceptual capacity to visualize the superior nature of the exemplar since this “portrait” was copied from Christ, who was the visible image of God.

Descriptions of living people that were inspired by portraits of divinity also had cultural precedent. Another way that images and people were compared in antiquity sought visual complements between images of divinities and living persons. In antiquity, divinity was understood as revealed and revered through images and image-making, even though the gods themselves were held to be above visual knowledge or mortal capacity to comprehend them.³⁷ This is not unlike the perception of Christ as the means by which God made Himself visible, and how icons of Christ made that revelation present even after the Ascension.³⁸ Yet, because of these ingrained associations of images of gods as having the aspiration and potential to encapsulate divine attributes, elevated – or “deified” – living persons were described as images with words that evoked the still and smooth qualities of stone or the vivid colors of paint. An early textual example that also demonstrates self-awareness of this tradition is a panegyric written by Lucian in the second century, interestingly entitled *Eikones*. In his praise of Panthea, mistress of Emperor Lucius Verus, Lucian presents the living woman as a kind of statue or painting by comparing her likeness to the statues and paintings of the most beautiful goddesses by the most prized artists.³⁹ However, he apparently offended her in his zealous flattery, for there also survives a second work authored in defense of his first offering, entitled *Hyper ton eikonon*. Since Panthea believed him to be an insincere flatterer, as she claimed she was not so perfectly formed in physical appearance as goddesses, Lucian responds by saying,

I did not compare you to Goddesses, oh great lady, but to the masterworks of our best artists made in stone, bronze, or ivory. It is not irreverent, I think, to compare men to the works of men. Unless you believe Athena is the statue made by Phidias, and the heavenly Aphrodite was created by Praxiteles at Knidos not so many years ago . . . I believe that the true images [of the gods] can not be mimicked by men.⁴⁰

In this way, Lucian creates through description and comparison a literary portrait of a beautiful woman that played upon the idea of the kind of perfected form that is reserved for images of divinities, defending the gods as the epitome of humanity in endeavor and beauty, but not limiting the gods to such conditions. Yet we also see that humans can only hope to emulate gods as images, in other words, in the way they are made visible to humans. This idea is not unlike how saints emulate Christ (and, as we see with Neophytos, painted icons of Christ) as the visible aspect of the invisible and unrepresentational God.

This cultural tradition that prized images as supreme expressions of human divinized form, reflective and indicative of virtue, and therefore a rhetorical visualization of lauded human qualities, had a profound impact on the development of the painted icon. The painted icon, like the imagined portrait as metaphor for the perfected being, was not merely for the preservation of features, but also a

means to recognize the supreme Christ-like virtues of the portrayed. Thus, certain features became prioritized over others and saints were made into types according to what qualities needed to be emphasized. There were universal signs, the halo, for example. But there were other factors more elusive, suggested by adjectives that were applied to living holy persons, visions of saints, and painted icons, adjectives that imply glowing radiance. Descriptions were predicated on earlier biblical or saintly types (as Bishop Cyriacus and his resemblance to Bishop John Chrysostom), and encounters were described with *topoi* rather than objective documentation. Moreover, comparisons of saintly bodies to painted icons were used to cover a wealth of attributes when looking at an actual saint. Neophytos and Lazaros both pulled from this tradition by framing their faces in such ways to evoke icons, making them visually immediate and visceral with their own appearances. Such cross references and the myriad associations implied with comparison to icons is documented as early as the Life of Daniel the Stylite, where it is written that, after his death, he was placed on a board and held up vertically for the assembled people to see. The visual significance was noted; his body appeared “like an icon.”⁴¹

It would be remiss not to include in this discussion the Byzantine emperor, who, drawing upon this legacy, also relied upon the painted icon to conceptualize more fully his living person. Just as Neophytos presented himself as though an icon with visual references to painted icons, sacred images guided the presentation of the real emperor. And so he adopted the appropriate visual phenomena, physically framing his person as sacred, as well as having his own visual portrayal play upon Christ-like tropes and iconography.⁴² Shared contexts of the living or portrayed emperor with images of Christ, conceptual links of divine and divinely appointed rulership, and the general iconicity reflected on their portraits further confirmed the relationship between Christ and the emperor. More direct comparisons of the living emperor with icons of Christ are attested in primary literature. Michael Italikos, for example, said of Emperor Manuel I that he went around on earth as if a living and moving statue of Christ,⁴³ describing the icon of Christ as three-dimensional in order to accommodate the emperor’s movement, as well as recalling past imperial encomia that invoked statuary (Anna Komnenos gave similar praise to her parents in her *Alexiad*, calling them “living statues”).⁴⁴ However, there was also interplay between the emperor and his own iconic image. An elucidating example can be found in the mid-twelfth-century development of the imperial ceremony of the *prokypsis* (πρόκυψις), a ritual display of the emperor and his family that occurred on Christmas, Epiphany, and Palm Sunday. The imperial family lined up on a stage as a curtain drew back to reveal the frontal, static figures.⁴⁵ As it is described, this presentation very likely resembled the imperial family portraits found in surviving manuscript illumination from the period, though this is not to suggest that such portraits were based on the *prokypsis* ceremony. However, we may reasonably argue the opposite, that emperors consciously presented themselves as they appeared in such iconic illumination – as well as mosaic murals such as those that still exist in Hagia Sophia and other media – so that iconicity was infused into the living emperor through visual association with

painted imperial icons.⁴⁶ As James Francis states, “images have become living and the living have become images.”⁴⁷

In this imperial example lies another point regarding the living holy person as an icon. Like the display of the imperial body, the saint’s living body was both the reality and his icon.⁴⁸ As Pseudo-Leontios of Neapolis wrote, echoing earlier sentiments about the ontological state of being an icon, “An icon of God is the human being who has transformed himself according to the icon of God, and especially the one who has received the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁹ This is preceded by the early stylite saints’ bodies, like that of Symeon the Elder, whose living body defied all gravity and limitations to stand upright, appearing to the crowds of pilgrims and disciples below like an antique statue atop an ancient column. The icon-like body of Daniel the Stylite lain out in death has already been mentioned. Theodora of Thessaloniki provides another example in which this iconification of her body occurs. When she, an old woman in her monastery, died, her face became that of a young, beautiful woman.⁵⁰ This transfiguration revealed the holiness she had kept hidden while she was alive. Her face also emitted rays of shining light and exuded *myron*, and visitors that came to view her body kissed her face. Thus, in many ways, her face served as an icon of her. This did not preclude the painting of an icon, which was accomplished soon after in miraculous fashion and which also emitted *myron*.⁵¹

These examples, combined with textual and visual support too vast to review here, demonstrate deliberate, conscious comparisons between painted icons and the living or deceased bodies of saints, as well as between images of Christ and the saint as an icon of Christ. In this complex conceptual exchange of what images are spiritually, visually, and perceptually, the notion that an icon becomes the means to make present a person separated by distance and time, while still relevant, becomes confounded. The “presence” that exists and is visible in a holy person is Christ, and Christ’s presence is reinforced and available through the saint. But the saint is also, perhaps redundantly, present. Neophytos may have drawn upon the image of Christ to reflect his role as Christ’s icon, but he was also an icon of himself. The saint was the medium of visibility for his icon instead of the icon being medium of the visibility of the saint, suggesting a more fluid and dynamic definition of an icon. Indeed, such comparisons were perhaps intended to clarify a transcendent reality where material-based definitions of “icon” were not necessary; the icon as a spiritual state rather than material object became the epitome of metaphysical transfiguration even while it was visually and perceptually conceptualized. The lines between a living icon that is as perfected, static, and eternal as an image, and a painted icon that conveys the visibility and presence of an eternal form, are deliberately erased.

How this is theoretically reasonable relies once again on the notion of form, as well as a deeper cultural understanding reflected in iconophilic discourse and indebted to Aristotle’s notions that any potential (*dynamis*) cannot be without its actuality (*energia*). In simple terms, a potentiality is simultaneous with its actuality, even if they do not co-exist. In this dynamic, Christ’s icon came into being at the moment of his Incarnation, an idea that was presented by Theodore of Stoudite

when he defended, almost counterintuitively, that there could be no prototype without its icon.⁵² Importantly for purposes here, this means that St. Neophytos' future painted icon was implicit in his living appearance just as his future icon assumed the existence of his prototype, and neither could exist without the other.

It also means that icons (as forms) exist even without yet being painted by an artist. The way an icon is made visible in a painting is only one aspect in its *potential* for visible revelation. In other words, the medium of the icon is not the material.⁵³ Rather, the medium is best understood as form (though we might just understand it as image independent of any substance, perhaps most comparable to the remembered appearance that occurs in the mind),⁵⁴ which is one and the same with the prototype, whether seen in the living person, or in a vision, or in a mental or artistic reconstruction. Form is also the vehicle of presence. Indeed, as Roland Betancourt recently has pointed out, we can dismiss discussions of presence or absence in icons as material objects.⁵⁵ It is more accurate to say that *form* is the medium and therefore the vehicle of presence. Certainly, this is what the iconophiles were asserting in their continuous invocations of form as the mutual characteristic of icon and prototype, not divided, but shared. In the painted icon, the image so enjoins the viewer through the medium of form, that the image is made present through its perception.

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In conclusion, I would propose that the conceptual similarities between living holy persons and painted icons in Byzantium were based on culturally conditioned expectations. The tradition of linking superior humans with images as well as the common belief in the living holy person as the icon of Christ and his reliance on painted icons to secure his identity suggests the reasonability of my proposal. This comparison between living and painted icon may be further justified by Byzantine interpretations of form as the medium of the icon, which is what is visible in a saint and his painted icon. Whether or not painted and living icons held the same sorts of viewer expectations remains to be determined.

Notes

- 1 As a starting point in this chapter, it is important that "painted icon" be defined as an image of a holy person that was produced as a sacred portrait (even though such a portrait does not actually have to be painted), in order to contrast it with a "living icon." The primary and secondary sources about icons as true likenesses of the subject are too vast to review here. For general coverage of the holy, Byzantine icon, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); C. Schönborn, *God's Human Face: The Christ-Icon* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994); L. Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* 2 vols. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978). For a discussion on saints' likenesses according to types, see H. Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 2 E.g., Gregory Palamas *Homily* 34: "Everything about the blessed divine nature is truly beautiful and desirable and is visible only to those whose minds have been purified.

- Anyone who gazes at its brilliant rays and its graces partakes, to some extent, as though his own face was touched by dazzling light. That is why Moses' countenance was glorified when he spoke. Do you observe that Moses too was transfigured when he went up the mountain and beheld the Lord's glory?" PG 151, 432B; trans. C. Veniamin, *Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas* (Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 2009), 270–271.
- 3 *Vita* Chapt. 43, available in A.-M. Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium: Tens Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), 201.
 - 4 See the beautiful discussion of this idea of physical transformation by P. Florensky, *Iconostasis*. D. Sheehan and O. Andrejev, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000 [written in 1922]), esp. 51–52.
 - 5 G. Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991), 23–33.
 - 6 *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000). Related to the subject of the perceptual interdependence of icons, living holy men, and hagiography is J. A. Francis, "Living Icons: Tracing a Motif in Verbal and Visual Representation from the Second to Fourth Centuries CE." *American Journal of Philology* 124/4 (2003), 575–600. Indispensable to the study of living holy men and how society perceived them in Late Antiquity is P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 80–101.
 - 7 An antique idea, as revealed by Plutarch, who wrote, "For it is not Histories I am writing, but Lives . . . Accordingly, just as painters get the likenesses in their portraits from the face and the expression of the eyes, wherein the character shows itself, but make very little account of the other parts of the body, so I must be permitted to devote myself rather to the signs of the soul in men, and by means of these to portray the life of each, leaving to others the description of their great contests." (*Vita Alexander* 1.2–3).
 - 8 This was the original impetus for the present chapter, first introduced at the Byzantine Studies of North America annual conference in 2012. A year later, the subject became a substantial part of my book *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), see esp. chapter 4: "Bodies and Icons."
 - 9 *Ibid.* More recently in this line of inquiry was a conference held in Rome in May 2016 entitled, "Spectacle of the Flesh: Iconic Living Bodies in Late Antiquity and Beyond," in which the cultural mechanisms and significance of the living body as an iconic image were explored.
 - 10 There are numerous studies on both sides of the issue, and not merely concerning early and medieval Christian art. For arguments in favor of presence in early Christian and Byzantine art, see W. Loerke, "Real Presence in Early Christian Art." In *Monasticism and the Arts*, T. G. Verdon, ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 29–52; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, *op. cit.*; Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons*, *op. cit.*, esp. 70–104. For presence in cult images in Western European art, see D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). An interesting argument about presence outside the study of Byzantine art is articulated by A. Harrison, "What Is Presence?" In *Presence: The Inheritance of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects*, R. Maniura and R. Shepherd, eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 161–172. D. T. Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 105–113, discusses evidence for the perceived numinous presence in ancient Greek cult images by way of the rituals surrounding them. For absence, see G. Dagron, "L'Image de Culte et le Portrait." In *Byzance et les Images* (Paris: La Documentation française, 1994), 123–150, esp. 125, where Dagron states that the icon is a window through which one views an absent saint; L. Brubaker, "Icons Before Iconoclasm?" In *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo* Vol. 2 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1998), 1215–1254; Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in*

- Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002) esp. 121; B. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon." *Art Bulletin* 88/4 (December 2006), 631–655. For a study of Roman icons as indicators of absence, see H. Kessler, "Real Absence: Early Medieval Art and the Metamorphosis of Vision." In *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo* Vol. 2 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1998), 1157–1211.
- 11 An overview is provided in A. Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*. J. M. Todd, trans. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
 - 12 Pope Gregory the Great, Letter 13 to Serenus; D. Norberg, *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum*. CCSL 140A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), 768.
 - 13 For example, Augustine, *De Trinitate* VIII, 4–5; for discussion, see Dagron "Holy Images and Likeness." *op. cit.*, esp. 24–25. Most well known is the articulation of this as a general mystical theology applied to all things visible and invisible in the corpus of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite. See also the chapter by Ivanović in this volume.
 - 14 E.g., John of Damascus *Apologia* I.9; ed. P. B. Kötter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos III: Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975), 83–84. This defense repeated Church Fathers' Christological arguments about the hypostatic union of Christ and God. For example, Basil of Caesarea writes that the image is identical in essence with the prototype, even though it is different in manifestation (Letter 38 of St. Basil to his Brother, Gregory), ed. Y. Courtonne, *Saint Basile, Lettres* 1 (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1957), 81–92. The formulation seems to owe much to Plato's definition of an *eikon* as linked to the model by similarity, yet having elements of difference so as not to be a true copy of the original (e.g., *Cratylus* 432a-e); see Steiner, 73.
 - 15 E.g., Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 18.45, who was speaking of Christ as an icon of God, yet using the icon of the emperor as an example; crit. ed. B. Pruche, *Basile de Césarée: Traité du Saint Esprit. Sources chrétiennes* 17 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1947); Eng. trans. available, D. Anderson, *St. Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 41. The Horos from Nicaea II of 787 states that the honor reaches the prototype and any who venerates the icon venerates the hypostasis of the one inscribed there; crit. ed. E. Lamberz, *Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum Concilii actiones I-III*, Vol. 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008). See also D. J. Sahas, *Icons and Logos, Sources in Eighth Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 179; L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. 27–29.
 - 16 For the theoretical aspects of icon participation, see A. Strezova, "Relation of Image to its Prototype in Byzantine Iconophile Theology." *Byzantinoslavica* 66 (2008), 87–106; for the perception about the participation of the holy person through the icon, see G. Galavaris, *The Icon in the Life of the Church: Doctrine, Liturgy, Devotion* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), esp. 6. Of course, this notion of the immaterial prototype did not stop the makers of icons and their frames from creating objects that evoked the heavenly realm with precious light-emitting and reflective materials that imposed a transcendental and unearthly quality to them. The Divinity was believed to be allusively perceptible with such visible phenomena.
 - 17 B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria III: Agatho to Michael I (766)*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 5, fasc. 1 (Paris, 1910), 142–143.
 - 18 "Ὡς παρόντα γὰρ καὶ τὸν ἀποιχόμενον διὰ τῆς ἐμφερείας καὶ μνήμης ἢ μορφῆς ἐμφανίζουσα, συμπαρακτεινομένην τῷ χρόνῳ διασώζει τὴν σχέσιν." See Marsengill, *Portrait and Icon*, *op. cit.*, 83; Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, *op. cit.*, 118–119, though he proposes the opposite meanings for the terms.
 - 19 See, for example, Aristotle's *On the Soul* 2, 12, though it is certainly used throughout other works; see D. Balla, "Μορφή, εἶδος καὶ ὅλη στην αριστοτελική βιολογία: περί

- ζών μορίων, περί ζών γενέσεως και περί ψυχῆς [Morphē, eidos and matter in Aristotle's biology: de partibus animalium, de generatione animalium and de anima]." PhD Diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2015). For a discussion of ancient sources about εἶδος pertaining to the visible characteristics of the soul, see Steiner, *op. cit.*, 34–35, 42–43.
- 20 *Contra arianos* III, 5; crit. ed. K. Metzler, *Athanasius Werke* I.1.3 (Berlin: De Gruyter 2000), 310–311.
- 21 *Dialectica* 4 and 5; Kötter, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, 93–94.
- 22 Photios, *Amphilochia* qu. 205; PG 101, 948–949; eds. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink, *Photius, Epistulae et Amphilochia*, Bd. I (Leipzig: Teubner, 1983).
- 23 Sources on Neophytos, his life, and his cave *enkleistra* include C. Mango and E. J. Hawkins, "The Hermitage of Saint Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966), 120–206; R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London: George Philip, 1988), 53–90; C. Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times, and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); see also S. Ćurčić, "Living Icons' in Byzantine Churches: Image and Practice in Eastern Christianity." *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, A. Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 192–212.
- 24 Galatariotou, *op. cit.*, 119.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 130–131.
- 27 See also the chapter by Bogdanović in this volume on architectural frames for "the holy."
- 28 Mango and Hawkins, *op. cit.*, 168.
- 29 *Typikon* Chapt. 22; trans. C. Galatariotou, "Neophytos: Testamentary Rule of Neophytos for the Hermitage of the Holy Cross near Ktima in Cyprus." In *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, J. Thomas and A. Constantinides Hero, eds. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 1360; see also Mango and Hawkins, *op. cit.*, 134. This arrangement at the *enkleistra* is not the only instance, as there are several special cells set up within churches for privileged monks and abbots – especially wealthy nobles or imperial family members who had retired to their private monastic foundations – from where they could attend church services through their own viewing window. These were usually high up, often located in a separate chamber adjacent to the *naos* or above the narthex in the *katechoumenion*. See Ćurčić, *op. cit.*
- 30 Mango and Hawkins, *op. cit.*, 141.
- 31 In other examples of private ascetic cells within churches, the mural decoration surrounding the window in the *naos* could suggest comparisons between icons depicted there (e.g., images of stylite saints) and the person within the cell. Ćurčić, *op. cit.*, esp. 197–201.
- 32 Gregory the Cellarer, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion*, Chapt. 226; Engl. trans. R. P. H. Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000). Ascetics were often understood to be akin to angels, in that their physical existence transfigured to reflect its more spiritual than earthly. For an overview of early textual references of this phenomenon, see R. M. Price, *A History of the Monks of Syria: Theodore of Cyrrhus* (a translation with introduction and notes) (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2008), 22, 30, with list of textual references on p. 258; see p. 171 (23) for text where a man asks Symeon Stylites the Elder if he is human or a "bodiless" being, i.e., an angel. Neophytos' portrait in the sanctuary of his *enkleistra* showing him ascending held between two archangels draws further attention to the association between angels and ascetic saints that had been in place since Late Antiquity.
- 33 *Histories* 16.10, 9–10; ed. W. Seyfarth, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum libri qui supersunt*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1978).

- 34 See also Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Epitoma rei militaris* II, 5, who states that, next after God, soldiers owe the emperor their “unwavering submission . . . as if to a physically present god.”
- 35 John Chrysostom, *Homily XIII*, 112 (PG 61, 110); *ibid.*, *Ad illuminados catechesis* II, 4 (PG 49, 235); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistle* 2.3 (Courtonne, *op. cit.*, 8).
- 36 K. Marsengill, “Painting Icons from Icons: The Theological Significance of Portraits in Late Antiquity.” In *Privatporträt. Die Darstellung realer Personen in der Spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst, Akten des Internationalen Workshops an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 14–15. Februar 2013*. V. Tsamakda and N. Zimmermann, eds. (Wien: Verlag der ÖAW, forthcoming).
- 37 Steiner, *op. cit.*, 80–99, discusses the appearances of images of gods, from the archaic to iconic.
- 38 Much of the early debates about Christ’s appearance centered around whether or not he was beautiful or ugly, a dilemma brought about by the passage in Isaiah 53:1–3 that was interpreted as prophecy about Christ’s appearance, which stated he was without beauty. Despite this, it was decided relatively early on that Christ’s perfection would have resulted in a corresponding human likeness. This is an interesting departure from antique divinities that depended upon their physical beauty as presented in images, and even farther from the more amorphous ancient cult statues where humanity is disguised altogether. For discussion of Christ’s changing appearance in the early Church, see R. M. Jensen, *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), esp. 134–158; and more recently, M. Bacci, *The Many Faces of Christ: Portraying the Holy in the East and West 300–1300* (London: Reaktion, 2014), esp. 103–115.
- 39 Greek and English available in *Lucian in Eight Volumes, Loeb Classical Library*. A. M. Harmon, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), vol. 4, 255–296. The example is discussed by Francis, *op. cit.*, 580–582. See Steiner, *op. cit.*, 295–304.
- 40 *Hyper ton eikonon* 23. Greek with English trans. available in Harmon, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, 297–336, esp. 326–329.
- 41 *Vita of St. Daniel the Stylite*, chapt. 99; Eng. trans. E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies Translated from the Greek* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), 69.
- 42 See esp. H. Maguire, “Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art.” *Gesta* 28/2 (1989), 217–231; I. Kalavrezou, “Helping Hand for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics in the Byzantine Court.” In *Byzantine Court Culture from 829–1204*. H. Maguire, ed. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 53–79. More recently on the iconicity of the emperor, M. C. Carile, “Imperial Icons in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: The Iconic Image of the Emperor between Representation and Presence.” *Ikon* 9 (2016), 75–98.
- 43 Ed. P. Gautier, *Michel Italikos, lettres et discours* (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1972), 294.
- 44 Book 3, 3; English trans. E.R.A. Sewter (London: Penguin Books 1969 [reprint 2009]), 109.
- 45 Extensively described by Pseudo-Kodinos in the fourteenth century: Ed. J. Verpeaux, *Pseudo-Kodinos: Traité des Offices* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1966), 195.24–204.23. Eng. trans. eds. R. Macrides, J. Munitiz, and D. Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies* (Farnham, Surrey, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013). For its appearance in the twelfth or thirteenth century, see M. Jeffreys, “The Comnenian Prokypsis.” *Parergon* 5 (1987), 38–53; P. Magdalino, “Court and Capital in Byzantium.” *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective*. J. Duindam, T. Artan, and M. Kunt, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 131–144, esp. 142; further description and discussion of the location and context of the *prokypsis* platform, see R. Macrides, “Ceremonies and the City: The Court in Fourteenth-Century Constantinople.” In *idem.*, 217–238, esp. 227–228, 232–234.

- 46 See the chapter by Carile in this volume.
- 47 Francis, *op. cit.*, 593.
- 48 P. Brown, *op. cit.*, 97.
- 49 PG 93, 1604; H. Thümmel, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre: Texte und Untersuchungen zur Zeit vor dem Bilderstreit* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur 139) (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 347. This sentiment was employed by iconoclasts to argue that living holy persons and saints, not their portraits, should be recognized as icons and emulated as such.
- 50 See note 3.
- 51 *Life of Theodora of Thessaloniki*, chapt. 43; Talbot, 201, 209.
- 52 *Third Refutation* D4: "The prototype and the image belong to the category of related things, like the double and the half. For the prototype always implies the image of which it is the prototype, and the double always implies the half in relation to which it is called double. For there would not be a prototype if there were no image; there would not even be any double, if some half were not understood. But since these things exist simultaneously, they are understood and subsist together. Therefore, since no time intervenes between them, the one does not have a different veneration from the other, but both have one and the same."
- And D5: "The prototype and the image have their being, as it were, in each other. With the removal of one, the other is removed, just as when the double is removed, the half is removed along with it. If, therefore, Christ cannot exist unless his image exists in potential, and if, before the image is produced artistically [or 'artificially'], it subsists always in the prototype: then the veneration of Christ is destroyed by anyone who does not admit that His image is also venerated in Him." Trans. C. P. Roth, *On the Holy Icons* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1981), 110. See also Erismann, *op. cit.*, 7; Parry, *Depicting the Word*, *op. cit.*, 61.
- 53 As opposed to the opinions expressed by Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, *op. cit.*, *passim*. and esp. 110–123; and B. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon, Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), *passim*.
- 54 On this point, I am indebted to Belting's astute article, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology." *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2005), 302–319, esp. 305.
- 55 As he puts it, "the Byzantine conception of vision, properly understood, necessitates that we stage the mediation of divine presence not in the icon, but rather in the visuality of the viewer, who deploys eye and mind to seize hold of the presence that the icon obliquely directs us toward," and he ends with the very astute and elegant statement, "Thus, when we discuss an artistic medium in Byzantium we should avoid restricting our discussion to painting, tempera, or wood, but instead endeavor to understand medium as an expanded field of inquiry in the exploration of cultural thought and artistic generativity, as an interval of adjacency between the potentiality and actuality of form, its being-in-the-world, and its perception. In other words, we must endeavor to think of 'medium' as a term that indicates and articulates mediation as a condition of possibility for perceptibility, rather than a reduction of that system to mere material substrates." R. Betancourt, "Tempted to Touch: Tactility, Ritual, and Mediation in Byzantine Visuality." *Speculum* 91/3 (2016), 660–678, citation on 689.



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Part III

The sacred delivered



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5 Delivering the sacred

Representing *Translatio* on the Trier Ivory

Ljubomir Milanović

Translatio was a process in which the bodies of saints were moved due to a belief in their being imbued with a divine agency that transcended death.¹ That the power of the saints was still active in their relics postmortem gave them the paradoxical status of being neither fully dead nor alive, allowing them to continue to be present in everyday life of the believer. As Carolyn Bynum has observed, “saints do not decay, in life or in death,” but “appear to us in visions, whole and shining.”² The visual representation of *translatio* therefore necessarily engaged the issue of how to distinguish between an ordinary corpse and a dead saint that partook of divine power.

The rhetorical solutions that literary commentators developed to relate the persistence of supernatural agency within the saintly corpse, such as the notion that the saint had “gone to sleep,” and therefore was in a state of living death, had no direct visual correlate; sleeping bodies and corpses, look the same.³ While written records most often provide clear descriptions of the translation of relics, visual representations of *translatio* are less explicit. The body of the saint formed the most important element in the scene of its translation. The relic required the image to provide material evidence for the faith, forging a palpable connection between the saint and his devotees. The representations of *translatio* advertised the cult via visual cues that underscored the power and presence of the saint, as well as the mediating role of those who tended the cult. Images of *translatio* had to evoke the miraculous survival of the powers of the saint in the relic at the level of narrative, while not themselves being vehicles for the power of the saint; these images did not manifest divine power themselves. The body of the saint placed within a closed coffin was often used as a key, identifying cue by which the viewer might recognize a scene of translation. Such a visual element, however, could also be easily confused with the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant or a funeral procession; imagery related to these scenes was often strikingly similar.⁴

The designers of representations scenes of *translatio* were therefore forced to evoke the indeterminate status of the saintly corpse. Reliquaries functioned as framing devices that transformed abject human remains into vehicles of divine agency. Representations of *translatio* similarly frame relics in a manner in which this abject-precious, man-god, dead-living uncertainty is maintained and exploited in order to make the power of God vividly present. For medieval

viewers, representations of *translatio* demarcated a liminal space that enabled a mystical exchange between the earthly and the heavenly realms.

The relief depicted on the Trier Ivory provided just such a visual experience. The ivory shows a scene of the *translatio* of relics in a reliquary casket within an elaborate architectural setting (Figure 5.1). As will be shown, its composition consists of objects or figures represented within a hierarchy of scale, in which the manipulation of size was used to emphasize the importance of specific objects within the image. Architectural framings structures, such as windows, doors, the gate, and the arcades often overlap. These multiple layers of architectural detail brought together in a single pictorial space complicate the symbolical meaning of the relief. In the words of Glenn Peers, framing devices serve “to break down barriers between this world and divine reality, and to collapse distinctions between signifier and signified ‘to the point of closing the gap between the self and their subject.’”⁵ This layering of framing structures on the ivory in the architectural forms evokes the liminality of the event, underscoring the fluid border between internal and external space, presence and absence, and the sacred and profane.

Even the material chosen for the object adds to its significance and the meaning of the scene. Ivory symbolized purity and moral fortitude. It was compared to Christ as it reflected his uncorrupted body with its white color and dense structure.⁶ As Jas Elsner explains, ivory “suggests a transgression of *natura* by *ars* and vice versa.”⁷ Often, early Christian and medieval makers of objects that contained relics used precious materials such as ivory and tried to create the art that would rival nature.⁸

The indeterminate nature of the contents of the reliquary casket being transported in the Trier Ivory reflects a fundamental problem inherent to all representations of *translatio*: an image of a holy, yet immobile, body is visually



Figure 5.1 The translation of relics, ivory, fifth to tenth century. Owner: Hohe Domkirche Trier, Domschatz, Germany.

Photo: Ljubomir Milanović.

indistinguishable from that of a mundane corpse. That no iconographic convention was developed to signify the ambivalent life-in-death status of body relics is telling. This ambivalent status of holy body relics was a key feature of both the ritual of *translatio* and its representations. Rather, representations of relics in *translation* offer the viewer the opportunity to project him- or herself into a narrative where he or she witnesses the movement of such relics.

The importance of relics and their *translatio* was recognized from Late Antiquity. A community would gather together in worship at the tomb of a martyr or a founding bishop. Relic shrines fused past and present by marking a locale, providing a material and spatial link back to an era of persecution and martyrdom, while at the same time creating a sense of historical continuity within Christian communities.⁹ The dispersion of holy shrines and places throughout the Christian world offered a topographical interpretation of Christian history, a myriad of sacred locations that were understood as places where heaven touched earth. Moreover, holy shrines sketched the contours of Christian hierarchy. As Sabine MacCormack has remarked, "this new sacred topography spelled out not only the collective memories of Christians but also the functioning and distribution of sacred authority in Christian society."¹⁰ Since the time of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (d. 397), relics were often placed on or underneath the church altar creating the link between heaven and earth.¹¹ The mobility of relics and their invested authority to shift and mould sacred topography are evidenced by the Trier Ivory.

The Trier Ivory has been the focus of intense scholarly debate for almost two centuries.¹² It was likely part of a larger ivory container, probably a reliquary.¹³ The ivory belongs to the treasury of the Cathedral in Trier. After being stolen during the French Revolution, it was sold to the collection of Count Renesse from Coblenz and, after his death, resurfaced in St. Petersburg. In 1844, it was returned to the Trier cathedral.¹⁴ The provenance of the object prior to the French Revolution is not clear, with many scholars believing that it first entered the treasury after the sack of Constantinople in 1204.¹⁵

There is much scholarly debate about the nature of the subject represented on the Trier Ivory. While most scholars agree that this is indeed a scene of *translatio*, they offer conflicting arguments about which relics are being moved. The reliquary featured on the ivory has been identified as that containing the Holy Robe of Christ,¹⁶ the relics of St. Stephen,¹⁷ or of the Virgin Mary;¹⁸ the scene has also been identified as related to the translation of relics of the True Cross,¹⁹ the Forty Martyrs,²⁰ and as the translation of the relics of Joseph and Zachariah.²¹

Currently, there is no agreed date for the ivory. The majority of scholars argue for the Early Byzantine period, between the fifth and seventh centuries; however, the lack of securely dated comparables that could provide stylistic parallels has made dating a vexed issue. Aus'm Weerth dated the ivory to the eleventh century based on the Image of Christ depicted on the portico.²² In 1863, John Westwood dated the object between the seventh and ninth centuries, classifying it as work of art from the Byzantine and Carolingian period.²³ Emile Molinier dated it to the fifth century based on the resemblance of the architecture with the Theodoric palace as shown in the mosaic in the church San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.²⁴

Gary Vikan and Kenneth Holum accept that this scene depicts a translation of relics that took place in 421, but note that this does not necessitate dating the ivory to the early fifth century. Vikan and Holum point out that the date of the event depicted has no bearing whatsoever on the date of the carving except as a *terminus post quem*.²⁵ John Wortley, for one, has commented that scholars have ignored the fact that the story of the fifth century translation first appears in Theophanes' *Chronicle* in the mid-tenth century.²⁶ Leslie Brubaker dated the Trier Ivory to the ninth or beginning of the tenth century by comparing it with two Byzantine ninth- or tenth-century ivories, the David casket and the Leo scepter, pointing to similar elements such as "the deep relief, the squat figures with over-large heads and hands, the roughly carved detail, and the puffy facial features."²⁷

As Wortley has succinctly stated, "the ivory has shown itself to be a particularly elusive work in both content and date and this point should be given its due weight."²⁸ While many scholars have focused their efforts on the identification of the individual being translated and date of the ivory's manufacture, almost none attend to the formal characteristics and symbolic meaning of the scene.

Carved in relief on a single piece of ivory (13.1 by 26.1 by 2.3 centimeters), the scene on the Trier Ivory is located within an architectural setting consisting of a long, colonnaded background introduced by a four-sided portico on the left.²⁹ The portico includes two stories, both flanked by pilasters. The lower level has three windows on the facing side and an arched opening on the adjacent side, which angles back sharply at the far left of the relief. On the upper level of the portico there is an image of a short-bearded Christ in the lunette of the facing side, as indicated by the cruciform nimbus.³⁰ The colonnaded building, running the length of the panel, appears to be a three-storied structure. The third level is an open gallery with bust-length figures set in two rows along its length and an arcade in low relief carved behind them.³¹ The first floor of the building on the ivory is an arcade with arches resting on pillars and men standing in the openings. The second story has rectangular windows divided by colonettes. Within each opening stands a half-length figure holding a censer in one hand with the other hand placed close to his or her face. While Josef Strzygowski was the first to suggest that the building in the background represents the palace of Constantinople, other scholars have postulated that it is meant to refer to a structure/church/basilica in Jerusalem.³²

The gate-like structure bearing the image of Christ on the far left side of the composition is partially obscured by an over-scale cart pulled by two horses or mules (Figure 5.2).³³ Two bearded men dressed in ecclesiastical garb ride in the carriage while holding a rectangular object with a gabled lid, which resembles late antique and early Christian reliquaries.³⁴ The side of the cart is decorated with an image of three standing men, dressed in togas and set in a deep frame.³⁵ Below this image two wheels are visible. A young man with bushy hair and a *chiton* attached to his toga with a large fibula drives the cart.

On the far right side of the composition is a church in the form of a three-nave basilica (Figure 5.3). The façade is represented at an angle while the opposite wall displaying the exterior of the semi-circular apse with its pumpkin-shaped roof, is frontal. The basilica's roof is gabled with crosses affixed to its two peaks.



Figure 5.2 The translation of relics, detail, ivory, fifth to tenth century. Owner: Hohe Domkirche Trier, Domschatz, Germany.

Photo: Ljubomir Milanović.

A side aisle projects from the longitudinal side of the main nave, and is indicated by the depiction of a lower roof. At the center of this side is a partially open door and three windows are found on the upper level. Suzanne Spain argues that this structure with the open door is actually a subsidiary chapel attached to the main basilica.³⁶

The architecture depicted on the Trier Ivory provides the setting for the activities of the people depicted. Three men are shown on the roof of the main nave of the church; two look toward the right edge of the ivory while the third faces the pair. A man on the side aisle's roof is either climbing up or off of the building.³⁷ The middle of the composition is occupied with a large group of people set in several registers. These figures occupy the space between the chariot and horses at the left and the main door of the church on the right. The figure at the head of the procession is dressed as an emperor. He approaches a person to the far right, who is positioned slightly in front of the other four, next to the church door and facing the procession as if to greet them. This figure wears the garb of an empress and holds a long processional cross in her left hand while making a gesture of



Figure 5.3 The translation of relics, detail, ivory, fifth to tenth century. Owner: Hohe Domkirche Trier, Domschatz, Germany.

Photo: Ljubomir Milanović.

greeting with the other.³⁸ The four figures in the procession hold candles or torches in their hands.

The entire plaque is deeply carved, but the far right and left sides are executed in a slightly higher, more-convex relief than the middle part of the ivory, which is more concave, probably reflecting the shape of a tusk (Figure 5.4). This undulation creates an s-curve or, as Suzanne Spain has described it, a hemicyclical plan.³⁹ This shape highlights the most important parts of the ivory – the gate and the church – by having them project farther than the rest of the composition, the significance of which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The border between internal and external space, and between presence and absence, is strongly underscored by the Trier Ivory's composition. First, we are shown a cart entering through a gate creating a sense of a passage between spaces or realms. The entrance to a city or a palace is shown as a physical boundary that mediates between the state and its public, functioning as a material marker of this transitional zone. The gateway to the city or palace served as a symbol that encapsulated the might and prestige of the court or state. It defined a public image of power either coming from the emperor or from some other source, such as relics.⁴⁰

The translation of relics focuses on the body of the saint and its ambiguous status as being suspended in a sort of living death. To be able to identify the subject of a particular scene it is necessary to have a clear marker that will determine the



Figure 5.4 The translation of relics, ivory, fifth to tenth century. Owner: Hohe Domkirche Trier, Domschatz, Germany.

Photo: Ljubomir Milanović.

subject of the composition. The indeterminate nature of the contents of the casket in the Trier ivory, the uncertainty of its containing fragments of a dead material or a living relic, reflects a fundamental problem of representations of *translatio*. One should not, therefore, view the absence of such a sign as a *lack*, but rather an indicator that this very ambivalence of the pictorial signifier “relic” resonates with the ambivalence of the relic itself and thereby provides a visual equivalence for the dead-undead status of the actual relic – now, however, the power or agency of the relic is evoked through the “magic” of signification, i.e. through narrative. This is to argue that this absence of a sign is being used to signify by conveying the indeterminacy that sat at the heart of the *translatio* ritual itself. In a Christian context, this uncertainty becomes the suspension of doubt known as faith.

The cart shown on the Trier Ivory enters the city or palace through a gate positioned in the far left side of the panel. A church is shown on the right side. Both objects frame the scene, demarcating the representational plane of the ivory as a liminal or transitional zone. The relics are prominently placed in front of the gate. Leslie Brubaker and other scholars have concluded that this represents the Chalkê gate in Constantinople.⁴¹ The two structures share a similar four-sided portico. The Chalkê gate was a main gateway to the imperial palace and as such, in Brubaker words, was a

physical boundary that mediated between the state and its public – it was a material marker of a transitional space – and perhaps for this reason the Chalkê was constructed by Byzantine authors both as an emblem of *impe-rium* and as a site of imperial transformation.⁴²

That the Chalkê gate was a liminal site that encapsulated transformation and change is indicated by Byzantine records from which we know that emperors

and empresses could hear the voice of God at this location.⁴³ This exchange with supernatural power is also indicated in the Trier Ivory by the passage of the body of the saint with supernatural powers, which imbued the new space with its holiness and thus transforming it from profane to sacred.⁴⁴

Similarly, the ritual of translation confirmed the power of the incorruptible body of the saint and encapsulated the moment of extension of his or her holiness to the new location, one that would bring power and prosperity to the community. An illuminated manuscript from the twelfth century, the *Acta translationis Sancti Mercury Martyris* in the Biblioteca Giovardiana, Veroli tells the story of the translation of relics of Saint Mercury of Caesarea (died ca. 250) in 768 to Benevento.⁴⁵ According to the script, the saint's relics were translated from Aeculanum to Benevento and brought to the city on a cart through the "Gold Door."⁴⁶ The historiated initial "T" of folio 15r shows the relics passing under the Arch of Trajan (ca. 117 CE).⁴⁷ The arch was incorporated into the city wall constructed by the Lombards as major gate into the city, immediately after the occupation of Benevento, between 570 and 571.⁴⁸ Yet, instead of relics on a cart, here one finds a representation of the living saint entering the city, indicating his *omnipresence* and linking the realms of the earthly and the heavenly. Furthermore, the saint is welcomed by a figure, likely Aréhis II himself, who offers him the keys to the city. In this way, the protection of the city is symbolically transferred from an earthly ruler to a heavenly protector.

As we have seen earlier, the gate structure in the ivory has been identified with the Chalkê gate in Constantinople. The Byzantine sources are not clear about the image of the Christ on the gate. One of the earliest mentioned by Brubaker is the *Theophanes Chronographia* written by Theophanes the Confessor (ca. 760–818) at the beginning of the ninth century.⁴⁹ Theophanes writes of the sixth-century Byzantine Emperor Maurice, who saw himself in a dream at the gate by the image of the Savior.⁵⁰ In the Trier Ivory, Christ's presence in the gate's tympanum allows the arch to function as an authenticator of relics, a device that could certify a ceremony that will transfer bodies that intercede between humanity and the divine.⁵¹ Passing through the gate and entering a city, monastery, or simply a church was understood in the medieval period as providing an opportunity for greater prosperity. On the Trier Ivory, this hope for a better life is presented in the form of the relics and the institution of the church, the latter being embodied by the two bishops who accompany them. By placing them on the same axis as the image of Christ on the arch, the makers align institutional and liturgical authority. The entrance of the relics on the cart into the enclosed, urban space through a gate bearing the image of Christ indicates the elevation of the relics from their worldly status to a more saintly position, and therefore, to their new talismanic function as protectors of the city, country, or dynasty.

The gabled lid on the reliquary casket indicates the physical ability to open and penetrate it, creating, in the words of Lisa Caesi, a "gateway into the sacred space of the shrine" and allowing "a direct interactive experience."⁵² The resemblance of the lid's shape with the roof on the basilica elucidates the final resting place for the relics, underneath or in the proximity to the altar of the church. On the way

to the deposit site, the relics pass through another kind of portal, the church door. Entering through that gate, the relics find their final resting place. From their new location, they begin their role of symbolically anticipating resurrection and the final victory over death that is reenacted during the Eucharist in the liturgy. The body of the saint is then associated with the body of Christ on the altar. Through this proximity to Christ the relic receives the validation that Victricius of Rouen described as a Christianization of the body.⁵³ In the Trier Ivory, the relic's depository site is indicated by the frontal representation of the church apse directly opposite the coffin containing the relics. The elaborate apse, carved almost in the round, resembles the rotunda of the church of Anastasis, or the tomb of Christ, as it was represented in an ivory from Milan around 400.⁵⁴

On the Trier Ivory, the space between the cart with relics and the church is occupied by a depiction of the emperor in the procession. The empress who greets the procession, however, although not enthroned, is clearly depicted as a stationary presence associated with the city, and specifically the church.⁵⁵ Scholars have considered the presence of the empress in light of her role as the likely donor of the chapel or the church located behind her, which, according to them, would have been a church likely dedicated to Saint Stephen.⁵⁶ One may argue, however, that her role as a triumphator is of even greater importance. Holding the cross as an imperial attribute, a feature of contemporary coinage as well; thus, she is identified as a Christian triumphator whose palladium of victory recalls Christian triumph over death.⁵⁷ In this case, the body of the saint, functioning as a trophy in the triumph over death, passed into the church to find its resting place.

The deep carving of the ivory and its concave compositional solutions extend the representational space to include the spectator creating a similar visual effect, though at a different scale, as that achieved on the relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome from around 82 CE (Figure 5.5).⁵⁸ By creating a *trompe l'oeil* effect, one may argue that the designers of the Trier Ivory sought to absorb the beholder within the scene of translation. The spectator is invited to voyeuristically penetrate the space "through an act of imaginative fantasy."⁵⁹ The creation of illusory space in the ivory is aided by the fact that the panel, even if it was part of a bigger object, presented itself to the viewer as self-contained unit. The curves behind the cart and the church throw them into relief, emphasizing the importance of the event. The structural position of figures and objects as well as their framing created a representational complexity that evokes multiple forms of sensory experience – touch, hearing, smelling, etc. The ivory's composition is designed to transport the viewer through a threshold in which divine and human meet in a manner similar to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's (ca. 500 AD) description of a ladder of images:

Our human hierarchy, on the other hand, we see filled with the multiplicity of perceptible symbols (*symbolôn*) lifting us upward hierarchically until we are brought as far as we can be into the unity of deification (*epi tēn henoeidē thoōsin*) . . . it is by perceptible images (*eikōsin*) that we are uplifted as far as we can be to the contemplation of the divine (*epi tas theias theōrias*).⁶⁰

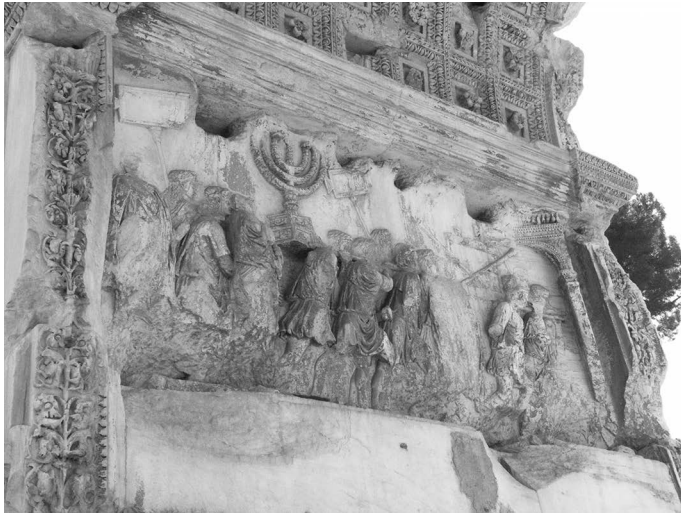


Figure 5.5 Spoils of Jerusalem, relief from the Arch of Titus, 82 CE, Rome, Italy.

Photo: Ljubomir Milanović.

The viewer of this object would have been familiar with the pictorial vocabulary of *translatio* and triumphal processions. The composition on the panel is represented in what Franz Wickhoff calls “complementary visual narration.”⁶¹ Consecutive episodes of a story have been incorporated into a singular visual presentation. This scene fuses together three moments into a single image: the scene of the passing of the carts through the gate, the procession of the emperor with his retinue, and the reception of the procession by the empress. The framing used in the Trier Ivory provokes modes of perception that alternate between the physical and the imaginative. By positioning the gate and the church on the edges of the panel, two buildings that symbolize the transformation of the relics, participants, and observers, the designers also gestured to imaginary spaces beyond its literal borders.

The author(s) of the ivory has nestled a sequence of spaces one inside the other, moving from the reliquary, to the church, to the courtyard, and finally to the city outside the gates, each space sitting inside the other like a series of Russian dolls. This same kind of representational play between inside and outside is found with the male figures on the second story of the colonnaded building (Figure 5.6). Their dangling censers transgress the limit of the window frame, locating their owners in the position, both inside and outside the structure simultaneously.⁶² The censoring heightens the sense of spiritual significance of the composition and the space, separating the sacred from the profane by the implied presence of the Holy Spirit.

By taking the sensual experience evoked by the ivory and the medieval viewer’s response into consideration, one may discover new, underexplored lines of



Figure 5.6 The translation of relics, detail, ivory, fifth to tenth century. Owner: Hohe Domkirche Trier, Domschatz, Germany.

Photo: Ljubomir Milanović.

inquiry. Indeed, the proliferation of figures found in the crowd both in, and on top of, the buildings (note the absent busts/heads on the top of the colonnade) has received relatively little notice in the secondary literature. The large number of figures compressed into a small space may have been intended to generate an empathetic encounter between the viewer and the ivory. Thus, the object may have preformed a function similar to the ritual itself, as a kind of a public spectacle, one with specific political and religious purposes.

Despite a lack of visual evidence, images of *translatio* reproduced in material objects, the social experience of these image-laden objects, and ceremonies the images refer to, require that viewers and participants believe the contents of the casket or the body on the bier was an immutable substance endowed with supernatural powers. For early Christian and medieval viewers, representations of *translatio* functioned as reenactments of a ceremony few would have had the opportunity to observe, allowing them to establish a virtual relationship with the saint's relics and thereby access his beneficence. Their formal construction reflected this function. These images often presented relics traversing boundaries and included pictorial elements that emphasized transition and movement such as carts, gates, doorways windows, permeable structures, and partially open containers or portals. Through such iconographic stratagems, representations of translation demarcated liminal spaces that facilitated a mystical exchange between the earthly and heavenly spheres for the viewer. The liminal framing structures of the Trier Ivory powerfully evoke such an encounter, enacting a dialectic of presence and absence, evidence and belief.

Notes

- * This chapter is part of the research on the project No. 177032 (tradition, innovation, and identity in the Byzantine world), supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. I would like to thank my dear friend Allan P. Doyle for his close reading of the text, helpful suggestions, and corrections.
- 1 Martin Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte und andere Quellen des Reliquienkultes*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 33 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), esp. 34–101, see also Ljubomir Milanović, “The Politics of Translatio: the Visual Representation of the Translation of Relics in the Early Christian and Medieval Period, The Case of St. Stephen.” PhD Thesis, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 2011, 8–59.
 - 2 Caroline W. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 220.
 - 3 Milanović, “The Politics of Translatio,” 37–41.
 - 4 Christopher Walter proposed possible similarities with the iconography of Byzantine depictions of funerals and the translation of the Ark of the Covenant. Walter based his arguments on a comparison between images of the translation of the Ark of the Covenant and the relic *adventus* such as the miniature from the Bible of Leo (Vat. Gr. 1) from the tenth century. Christopher Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London: Variorum, 1982), 150–151; Thomas F. Mathews, “The Epigrams of Leo Saccellarios and an Exegetical Approach to the Miniature of Vat. Reg. Gr. 1.” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 43 (1977), 94–133.
 - 5 Gleen Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 133.
 - 6 See the Song of Solomon 5:14, where the body of Messiah is compared with the bright white color of ivory. See also Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *Dictionary of Christian Art* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 170.
 - 7 Jas Elsner, *Roman Eyes, Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 128.
 - 8 Martina Bagnoli, “The Stuff of Heaven: Materials and Craftsmanship in Medieval Reliquary.” In *Treasures of Heaven, Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and James Robinson, eds. (New Heaven and London: British Museum Press, 2011), 137–147, 145. For more on precious material and their significance in the Middle Ages, see Susannah D. Fisher, “Materializing the Word: Ottonian Treasury Bindings and Viewers Reception.” PhD Thesis, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2012, esp. 162–213.
 - 9 The best example of this is the tomb of St. Peter in Rome, see Margherita Guarducci, *The Tomb of St Peter: The New Discoveries in the Sacred Grottoes of the Vatican* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1960); see also John Evangelist Walsh, *The Bones of St Peter: the First Full Account of the Search for the Apostle's Body* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982); Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 155; Pietro Zander, “The Vatican Necropolis.” *Roma Sacra* 25 (2003), 1–64. See also chapter by Belgin-Henry in this volume.
 - 10 Sabine MacCormack, “Loca Sancta: The Organization of Sacred Topography in Late Antiquity.” In *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*. Robert Ousterhout, ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 7–41.
 - 11 Arnold Angenendt, “Relics and Their Veneration.” In *Treasures of Heaven, Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe*. Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and James Robinson, eds. (New Heaven and London: British Museum Press, 2011), 19–28, 21.
 - 12 On the early history of the Trier Ivory, see L. von Eltester and H. Schuermans, “Die ehemalige Renaissance Sammlung.” *Jahrbücher des vereins von Alterthumsfreunden*

- im rheinlande* 58 (1876), 90–95; see also Richard Delbrück, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, I (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1927–1929), 261–270, 269; Nikolaus Irsch, *Der Dom zu Trier* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1931), 319–323.
- 13 Brubaker, “The Châlke Gate,” 277.
- 14 Paul Weber, *Der Domschatz zu Trier. Seine Geschichte und sein heutiger Bestand* (Augsburg, Köln: Filser, 1928), 10–12; F.W. Fisher, “Die Elfenbeintafel des Trierer Domschatzes.” *Kurtrierisches Jahrbuch* 9 (1969), 5–19.
- 15 The literature on the Trier Ivory is voluminous. For more, see Ernst Aus’m Weerth, *Kunstdenkmäler des christlichen Mittelalters in den Rheinlanden* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1857), 88–89; M. Scheins, *Kunstschätze der Münsterkirche in Aachen nebst einigen Kunstwerken aus Trierer Kirchen* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1876); John O. Westwood, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum* (London: Printed by G.E. Eyre and W. Spottiswoode, 1876), 74–75; Wilhelm Lübke, *Geschichte der Plastik von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1880), 388; Charles De Linas, “Les Expositions retrospectives de Bruxelles, de Düsseldorf et de l’union centrale des beaux-arts, a Paris.” *Revue de l’art chrétien* 14 (1881), 119–122; Franz Xaver Kraus, *Real-encyklopädie der christlichen Alterthümer*, volume I (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1882), 409; Charles Rohault de Fleury and Georges Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe: études archéologiques sur ses monuments* (Paris: Vve. A. Morel et Cie., 1883) VII, 117; Emile Molinier, “Le trésor the Trèves.” *Gazette archéologique* 9 (1884), 42; Léon Palustre, and Xavier Barbier de Montault, *Le trésor de Trèves* (Paris: A. Picard, 1885), 1–2; André Pératé, *L’archéologie chrétienne* (Paris: Ancienne maison Quantin, 1892), 339; Georg Stuhlfauth, *Die altchristliche Elfenbeinplastik* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1896), 168–172; Émile Molinier, *Histoire général des arts appliqués à l’industrie du Ve à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Catalogue des ivoires*, vol. 1 (Paris: E. Lévy, 1896), 74–76; Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell’arte italiana* I (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1901), 92 (plate), 146; Charles Diehl, *Manuel d’art byzantin* (Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1910), 44 (picture); Heinrich Glück, *Das Hebdomon und seine Reste in Makrikoi: Untersuchungen zur Baukunst und Plastik in Konstantinopel. Beiträge zur vergleichenden Kunstforschung* I (Vienna: Österr. Staatsdruckerei, 1920), 42–51; Paul Weber, *Der Domschatz zu Trier*, 10–12; Edmund Weigand, *Zur spätantiken Elfenbeinskulptur* (Leipzig: [hrsg. von B. Kautsch, W. Finder u. a.], 1930/1), 51f.; Klaus Wessel, “Studien zur oströmischen Elfenbeinskulpturen.” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Universität Griefswald* 3 (1953–1954), 12–15; Stylianos Pelekanidis, “Date et interpretation de la plaque en ivoire de Trèves.” *Revue des études byzantines* 12 (1954), 361–371; Venance Grumel, “A propos de la plaque d’ivoire du trésor de Trèves.” *Revue des études byzantines* 12 (1954), 187–190; Hermann Schnitzler, *Rheinische Schatzkammer. Tafelband* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1957), 21 and plates 1–5; Wolfgang F. Vollbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 1952), 70, No. 143; Fischer, “Die Elfenbaintafel des Trierer Domschatzes,” 5–19; Suzanne Spain, “The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977), 279–304; Winfried Weber, “Die Reliquienprozession auf der Elfenbeintafel der Trierer Domschatzes und das kaiserliche Hofzeremoniell.” *Trierer Zeitschrift* 42 (1979), 135–179; Kenneth G. Holum and Gary Vikan, “The Trier Ivory, ‘Adventus’ Ceremonial, and Relics of St. Stephen.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979), 113–133; John Wortley, “The Trier Ivory Reconsidered.” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 21 (1980), 381–394; Laurie J. Wilson, “The Trier Procession Ivory: A New Interpretation.” *Byzantion* 54 (1984), 602–614; Paul Speck, “Weitere Überlegungen und Untersuchungen über die Urprünge der byzantinischen Renaissance, mit einem Nachtrag: Der Trierer Elfenbein und andere Unklarheiten.” *Varia 2, Poikila Byzantina* 6 (Bonn, 1987), 253–283, esp. 275–278; Leslie Brubaker, “The Chalkê Gate, the Construction of the Past, and the Trier Ivory.” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999), 258–285.

- 16 Aus'm Weerth, *Kunstdenkmäler*, 88 note 43.
- 17 J. P. Martinov, in a text of 1881, suggested that it depicts the transport of St. Stephen's relics from Jerusalem to Constantinople in 428 under Pulcheria (414–453) and her brother Emperor Theodosius II (401–450), see Stuhlfauth, *Die altchristliche Elfenbeinplastik*, 171 n.1, also Pératé, *L'archéologie*, 339 and Kraus, *Real-encyclopädie der christlichen Alterthümer*, 409. More recently, Gary Vikan and Kenneth Holum following Martinov, claim that the ivory shows the relic of St. Stephen the protomartyr being greeted by the Empress Pulcheria and her brother the Emperor Theodosius II in 421, see Holum and Vikan, "The Trier Ivory," 127–133.
- 18 Franz Kraus identified the relics as those of the Virgin Mary, which were translated to the Blachernae church in Constantinople under the Emperor Leo I (401–474) and his wife Verina (d. 484); see Franz Xavier Kraus, *Geschichte der christlichen Kunst* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1896), 502.
- 19 Emile Molinier recognizes the imperial pair as a Constantine and Helen, and the scene as the translation of the True Cross from Jerusalem to Constantinople, see Molinier, *Histoire général*, 74–76. Spain also identifies it as the translation of the True Cross, but this time by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (575–641) and his wife Martina (d. after 641); see Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," 298.
- 20 Josef Strzygowski claimed that the scene represented the translation of relics of the Forty Martyrs to Constantinople on the occasion of the dedication of the Church of Saint Irene in 552; see Strzygowski, *Hellenistische und koptische Kunst*, 77–78, but also Alexander Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople, the Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London: John Murray, 1899), 216–217, as well in Jean Ebersolt, *Sanctuaires de Byzance* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1921), 13–15. Strzygowski's identification of the translation of relics of the Forty Martyrs was accepted by André Grabar and Klaus Wessel; see Grabar, *Martrium*, 352 and note 4; Wessel "Studien," 12–15.
- 21 Stylianos Pelekanidis claims the scene as the translation of the relics of Joseph and Zachariah in 415; see Pelekanidis, "Date et interpretation," 370–371.
- 22 Aus'm Weerth, *Kunstdenkmäler*, 89.
- 23 Westwood, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, 64–65.
- 24 Molinier, *Histoire général*, 74–76.
- 25 Holum and Vikan, "The Trier Ivory," 122, note 43.
- 26 Wortley, "The Trier Ivory Reconsidered," 382–385.
- 27 Brubaker "The Châlke Gate," 275–276. For images see page 284, fig. 4, and 285, fig. 5.
- 28 Wortley, "The Trier Ivory Reconsidered," 393.
- 29 For the dimension and the description of the ivory, see Delbrück, *Die Consulardiptychen*, 261–267.
- 30 Suzanne Spain argues that the image of Christ with the short beard, long hair and a cruciform nimbus appeared in art after 550 and for that reason she gives the ivory to a post-Justinianic date. Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," 286.
- 31 Two- or multi-storied buildings with arcades are found on some representations from the early Christian period such as the mosaic representation of Theodoric's Palace in the basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna from ca. 500. Another such structure is shown in the scene of *adventus* that portrays Joseph's triumph through the streets of Egypt in the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Paris, Bibl. Nat. cod. Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2334, fol. 40r) from the early seventh century. On the mosaic in Ravenna, see James Snyder, *Medieval Art, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture 4th–14th Century* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1989), 116–117. For the Ashburnham Pentateuch and its dating, see André Grabar, *The Golden Age of Justinian* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1967), esp. 214; Dorothy Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination and the Ashburnham Pentateuch* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For more on streets as part of the public spectacle and its architecture: Diane Favro, "The

- Streets Triumphant: The Urban Impact of Roman Triumphal Parades." In *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 151–164.
- 32 Josef Strzygowski, *Hellenistische und koptische Kunst in Alexandria* (Vienna: Mechitharisten-Buchdr, 1902), 76–79. For the setting of the scene in Jerusalem, see O. Wulff, "Ein Gang durch die Geschichte der althristlichen Kunst mit ihren neuen Pfadfinden: Zur Kritik und Ergänzung der Forschungen J. Strzygowskis und L.v.Sybels." *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 35 (1912), 193–241; and Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," 296–297. Cyril Mango has accepted Grabar's hypothesis that the architectural background represents a basilical church in flattened-out perspective: André Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique* 2 (Paris: Collège de France, 1946), 352 f.; n. 4; Cyril Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (København: I kommission hos Ejnar Munksgaard, 1959), 105.
 - 33 The history of carts being pulled by horses or mules in antiquity is explained in detail in Georges Raepsaet, "Attelages antiques dans le Nord de la Gaule les Systemes de Traction par Equides." *Trier Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst des Trier Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete* 45 (1982), 215–273.
 - 34 For a reliquary in the shape of a miniature sarcophagus from the Church of St. Theodore at Khirbet Beit Sila from the sixth century, see *Cradle of Christianity*. Yeal Israeli and David Mevorah, eds. (The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 2000, 2006), 76 and 217. Cynthia Hahn has argued that when medieval reliquaries are in question there is no clear connection between signifier and signified, or, in other words, there is no firmly established relationship between an actual relic and its artistic representation. The most common and suggestive early shape of reliquaries was that of the sarcophagus. Its primary association is death and burial, which contradicts the status of the saint who, it is claimed, is still active in his relics. Cynthia Hahn, "Metaphor and Meaning in Early Medieval Reliquaries." In *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Papers from "Verbal and Pictorial Imaging: Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400–1000."* (Utrecht, 11–13 December 2003), Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Mostert, eds. (Turnhout and Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 239–263, 241. It has been suggested that a possible theological reason for such a shape for a reliquary can be found in the fact that the relics of the martyrs represent their whole body; see Galit Noga-Banai, *The Trophies of the Martyrs: An Art Historical Study of Early Christian Silver Reliquaries* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127.
 - 35 For the iconography of toga-clad men in the cart decoration, see Margaret Bieber, "Roman Men in Greek Himation (Romani Palliati) a Contribution to the History of Copying." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103/3 (1959), 374–417.
 - 36 Spain writes of the complex of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and sees the church shown on the Trier Ivory as the chapel of the True Cross. For Spain, the open doors suggest the resting place for relics of the True Cross, which she argues are what are being translated on the ivory. Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," 296–297.
 - 37 The presence of men on the church's roof is explained as indicating that it was funded and built by Empress Pulcheria. Holum and Vikan, "The Trier Ivory," 131; Ioli Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court." In *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. Henry Maguire, ed. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 53–79, 58.
 - 38 Spain gives a detailed description of the empress' clothes including possible iconographic sources of comparison. She also sees the empress' right hand as a sign that she is going to receive the candle from the emperor in front of her, see Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," 296–297.

- 39 For more detailed description of the ivory, see Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," 279–304.
- 40 Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "The 'King's Advent:' And The Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina." *The Art Bulletin* 26/4 (1944), 207–231, 212–213. On the importance and the representations of the gates in the medieval art, see Julian Gardner, "An Introduction to the Iconography of the Medieval Italian City Gate." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), 199–213; Felicity Ratté, "Architectural Invitations: Images of City Gates in Medieval Italian Painting." *Gesta* 38/2 (1999), 142–153.
- 41 Brubaker, "The Chalkê Gate," 271 and note 44.
- 42 Brubaker, "The Chalkê Gate," 259. The early description of the gate comes from Procopius after it was restored in the sixth century: *Procopius, On Buildings* I.x.11–20. Henry Bronson Dewing, trans. (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press: Heinemann, 1971), 84–87; see also Mango, *The Brazen House*, 30–34.
- 43 John of Antioch in the early seventh century, in *Excerpta de insidiis*. De Boor, ed. (Berolini: Weidmann, 1905), 148. For the translation, see Mango, *The Brazen House*, 111. See also Brubaker, "The Chalkê Gate," 267.
- 44 On the transformation of the profane into sacred space, see also the chapter by Carile in this volume.
- 45 For the manuscript, see Elias A. Loew, *The Beneventan Script. A History of the South Italian Minuscule*. Second edition enlarged and prepared by Virginia Brown, vol. 2 (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1980), 170–171. For the eighteenth-century redaction of the manuscript by Victorio Giovardi, see Victorio Giovardi, *Acta passionis et translationis sanctorum martyrum Mercurii ac XII. fratrum, necnon lectiones pro solenni basilice Sanctae Sophiae Beneventi dedicatione : Ex antiquo membranceo codice ejusdem ecclesiae eruta ac notis illustrata, nunc primum in lucem prodeunt* (Rome: J. B. a Caporalibus, 1730).
- 46 Relics of St. Mercury were introduced to the West by Aréchis II, the Duke of Benevento, who translated the relics to the church of St. Sophia in Benevento in 768, and had the saint's Greek passion translated into Latin. Laura Alandis Hibbard Loomis, *Adventures in the Middle Ages: A Memorial Collection of Essays and Studies* (New York: B. Franklin, 1962), 188; Stéphane Binon, *Essai sur le cycle de saint Mercure, martyr de Déce et meurrier de l'empereur Julien* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1937), 1–10.
- 47 For the image, see Virginia Brown et al., *Catalogo dei più antichi manoscritti della Biblioteca Giovardiana di Veroli* (Roma: Gruppo editoriale internazionale, 1996), Pl. 1. On the arch, see Ian Richmond, "The Arch at Beneventum." In *Roman Archaeology and Art: Essays and Studies*. Peter Salway, ed. (London: Faber, 1969), 229–238; Mario Rotili, *L'Arco di Traiano a Benevento* (Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, Libreria, 1972), 131–175; Ernst Künzl, *Der römische Triumph, Siegesfeiern im antiken Rom* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 24–28.
- 48 On the history of the wall in Benevento, see Rotili, *L'Arco di Traiano*, 5–8; see also Hans Belting, "Studien zum beneventanischen Hof im 8. Jahrhundert." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962), 141–193, especially note 1 with the older bibliography on this topic.
- 49 *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813*. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 410.
- 50 Brubaker, "The Chalkê Gate," 266.
- 51 According to Thiofrid of Echternach, Christ transfers his own incorruptibility to saints decaying body giving them power to become members of His own body; see Thiofrid of Echternach, *Flores epytaphii sanctorum* 1.4, CCCM 133, p. 20, L. 80, as cited by Angenendt, "Relics and Their Veneration," 22.
- 52 Lisa Victoria Ciresi, "A Liturgical Study of the Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne." In *Objects, Images, and the Word: Art in the Service of the Liturgy*. Colum Hourihane, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University in association with Princeton University Press, 2003), 202–230, 212.

- 53 Gillian Clark, "Translating Relics: Victricius of Rouen and Fourth-Century Debate." *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001), 161–177, 177.
- 54 On Milan's ivory, see Danielle Gaborit Chopin, *Ivories du Moyen Age* (Fribourg: Office du livre, cop., 1978), 80, n. 111.
- 55 Milanović, *The Politics of Translatio*, 78–79. See also Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 55–56.
- 56 Holum and Vikan, "The Trier Ivory," 131; Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands," 58.
- 57 For coins with a representation of the empresses holding the cross, see Leslie Brubaker, Helen Tobler, "The Gender of Money: Byzantine Empresses on Coins (324–802)." *Gender and History* 12/3 (2002), 572–594. Suzanne Spain argues that using the cross as an attribute of the empress reflects not only contemporary coins, but also that the cross is intended to recall Helen, mother of Constantine the Great who discovered the True Cross; see Spain, "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," 300; Holum and Vikan rightly conclude that the cross should not be understood as an attribute of rank or sainthood. They further claim that the presence of the cross identifies the scene of *adventus* as a triumphant event "partaking in the ultimate victory of Christ on Golgotha." They place the cross in its historical context, comparing it to processional crosses, such as the so-called cross of Constantine that existed in Constantinople in the fourth century. Holum and Vikan claim that according to some written sources, Pulcheria and Theodosius II "introduced this cross in the palace to serve as a palladium of victory, a physical guarantee that Christ's victory on Golgotha would be repeated in the warlike undertakings of Theodosius and his sister." Holum and Vikan, "The Trier Ivory," 123, 129.
- 58 On Arch of Titus, see M. Gjodesen, "A Fragment of the Arch of Titus." In *Studia Romana in honorem Petri Krarup septuagenarii*. Karen Ascani, ed. (Odense: Odense University Press, 1976), 72–86; Holloway, "Some Remarks on the Arch of Titus," 183–189; Leon Yarden, *The Spoils of Jerusalem on the Arch of Titus* (Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Rom and Göteborg: P. Åström, 1991); Fred S. Kleiner, "The Spoils of Jerusalem on the Arch of Titus: A Re-Investigation." In review of Leon Yarden, *American Journal of Archaeology* 96, no. 4 (October 1992), 775–776; Künzl, *Der römische Triumph*, 20–22.
- 59 Jas Elsner, "Between Mimesis and Divine Power: Visuality in the Greco-Roman World." In *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Other Saw*. Robert S. Nelson, ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45–70, 61. See also chapters by Lidova, Marsengill, and Bogdanović in this volume.
- 60 *De Ecclesiastical Hierarchia* 1.2 PG 3.373AB, as cited by Jas Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 98. On the critical aspects of Areopagite thought, see also chapter by Ivanović in this volume.
- 61 Michael Gubser, *Time's Visible Surface: Alois Riegl and the Discourse on History and Temporality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 117.
- 62 Lihi Habas, "Donation and Donors as Reflected in the Mosaic Pavement of Transjordan's Churches in the Byzantine and Umayyad Periods." In *Between Judaism and Christianity: Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Mati Meyer, eds. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 73–91, 84; Edward G.C.F. Atchley, *A History of the Use of Incense in Divine Worship, Alcuin Club Collections* 13 (London: Longmans, 1909), 94–96.

6 Bodies in motion

Visualizing Trinitarian space in the Albenga baptistery

Nathan S. Dennis

The early sixth-century baptistery in Albenga, Italy, contains one of the earliest attempts to render the Christian Trinity in pictorial form (Figure 6.1).¹ Employing a sophisticated abstract composition, the mosaic of the barrel vault over the north-eastern interior niche displays a tripartite group of interlocking *chi-rho* monograms imprinted upon an equally tripartite gradient-blue nimbus (Figure 6.2). The composition features a large *chi-rho* monogram composed of golden-yellow and white marble tesserae that is contained within a circular field of light-blue glass mosaic. The adjoining three fields of increasingly darker-blue glass tesserae not only encase the arms of the monogram as they extend outward, transgressing the pictorial borders that attempt to circumscribe them, but they also frame the entire imprint of the monogram itself, creating a tripartite, repeating emblem that is both discrete in three individual compositional fields and united into one image with seemingly permeable boundaries.² In other words, there are three distinct *chi-rho* monograms layered on top of one another, and yet, taken as a comprehensive emblem, there is but one large *chi-rho* symbol. Surrounding the monogram are twelve white doves; immediately above the monogram is a small orb containing a golden cross; and then the entire compositional field of the vault is filled with eighty-six eight-pointed white stars against a deep, lapis-colored background that provides a cosmological frame for this series of interpenetrating blue spheres that suggest circular, rotational movement.

The mosaic continues into the lunette against the back wall of the niche, above the window, where two lambs flanking a jeweled cross in a paradisiacal landscape are depicted, with a thick rinceaux border framing the architecture of the niche. On the underside of the window arch is a white anchor within a gradient-blue mandorla similar to that in the *chi-rho* composition in the vault. And over the entrance to the niche (Figure 6.3), framing the arch, is a fragmentary inscription that Pietro Toesca in 1912 first reconstructed as “NOMINAMVS QVORVM HIC RELIQVIAE SVNT,” or “We call upon [them] whose relics are here.”³ Both the reconstruction and interpretation of this inscription are problematic,⁴ but Toesca’s reading has nevertheless been accepted by most scholars over the last century without a significant challenge.⁵ Below this inscription appears a list of martyrs’ names, including Sts. Stephen, John the Evangelist, Lawrence, Nabor, Protasius, Felix, and Gervasius, with the two missing names on the lowest register generally



Figure 6.1 Barrel-vault mosaic from the northeastern niche of the Albenga baptistry, sixth century.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.

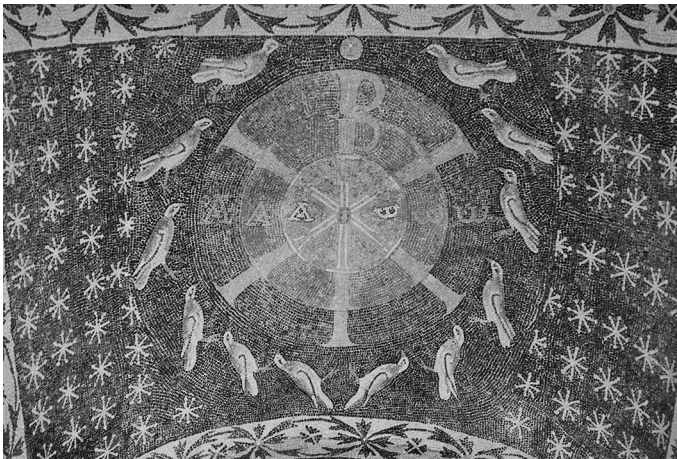


Figure 6.2 Detail of the barrel-vault mosaic from the Albenga baptistry, sixth century.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.

believed to have been St. Victor and Sixtus I, who was both pope and mentor to St. Lawrence, whose name appears immediately above. The niche mosaics were originally part of a much larger pictorial program covering the adjacent walls and pavement surrounding the baptismal font, of which only small patches of tesserae now remain that show birds perched among acanthus tendrils. Toesca



Figure 6.3 Detail of the mosaic inscription from the outer wall of the Albenga baptistery niche, sixth century.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.

also reported that he saw two additional words in white mosaic tesserae among the severely damaged portion of the left outer niche wall – S[AN]C[TV]S and FECIT – which may indicate that a donor name once appeared alongside the niche mosaics.⁶

The Albenga baptistery and its mosaics have been the subject of numerous archeological and architectural investigations, often related to the 1900–1901 restoration by Alfredo d’Andrade.⁷ The unusual iconography of the central vault, on the other hand, has received comparatively little attention, and the relationship between early baptismal liturgies and this prominent Trinitarian emblem within the baptistery has been overlooked entirely. Mario Marcenaro, one of the few scholars to examine the iconography in detail, suggested that the mosaic was originally designed as an anti-Arian declaration at a time when the Arian Ostrogoths ruled most of northern Italy from the court of Ravenna.⁸ The mosaic, however, was more than a political and theological stance against Arian incursions in the north. It was a critical component in the Trinitarian confessions that occurred within the space as part of the early Christian baptismal liturgy. Catechumens initiated into the Christian mysteries through the waters of baptism aligned themselves with the Trinity, not only as a gesture of allegiance, but also as inheritors of the *imago Trinitatis* and imitators of its mystical form of interpenetrative movement.⁹

This form of permeating, rotational movement, or *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις),¹⁰ as it was termed by Greek theologians in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, was used in discussions of the Trinity or the relationship between particular members of the Trinity from as early as the fourth century, eventually culminating in John of Damascus’ eighth-century treatise, *De fide orthodoxa*, which

provides the earliest systematic discussion of *perichoresis* and Trinitarian movement.¹¹ *Perichoresis* implied a form of interpenetration and interweaving, with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit moving fluidly through one another as though engaged in a rhythmic, rotational motility. Filling a lacuna in the scholarship on the Albenga baptistery specifically, and clarifying the relationship between Trinitarian theology and early Christian baptism generally, I would like to suggest that the unusual Trinitarian iconography of the baptistery's mosaics functioned as a paradigm for understanding the relationship between architecture and bodily movement within baptismal space. In early Christianity, the mystical union between the mundane and supernatural was particularly evident in the rite of baptism, in which the Christian initiate was thought to occupy a space where visions of paradise and even God himself were made possible through a transformation of the carnal senses into spiritual perception.¹²

The corpus of so-called mystagogical catecheses from the late fourth and early fifth century makes clear that baptism was intended as an epiphany. The interior space of the early Christian baptistery, therefore, was transformed into a *limen*, a threshold that balanced on the edge of physical and metaphysical realities, where baptismal initiates, or catechumens, could paradoxically glimpse the immaterial divine even as they remained rooted firmly within a material context. However, these mystical spaces were permeable and the divine-human exchange reciprocal. The earthly and heavenly worlds were often thought to move harmoniously through one another inside the baptistery, and as catechumens gazed upon the divine, the divine gazed back at them.¹³ In this way, as the heavenly bodies of the Trinity were visualized *perichoretically* – that is, in the act of an interpenetrative movement – they established a paradigm for catechumens to understand their own *perichoresis* within baptismal space as they imagined themselves weaving in and out of terrestrial and celestial realities through a seemingly permeable veil that afforded them a vision of the eschatological paradise that awaited them after death. This interaction with the divine through a form of both imagined bodily movement and actual physical procession would have correlated with the catechumens' Trinitarian confession inside the baptistery, effectively transforming them into *imagines Trinitatis* and confirming their mystical union with the Christian Godhead.

Albenga and the rise of Trinitarian iconography

As Marcenaro and Nicolò Palmarini have noted, the Albenga *chi-rho* monogram is by no means unusual in its most basic form.¹⁴ *Chi-rho* and *alpha-omega* emblems were some of the most common symbols in early Christianity for representing the name of Christ and his eschatological declaration of eternity in Rev. 22.13. The *chi-rho*, in particular, began to appear regularly in early Christian churches and baptisteries, often against a starry sky, such as the mosaic cupola of San Giovanni in fonte in Naples (Figure 6.4). Similar cosmic backgrounds frame crosses in contemporaneous churches, chapels, and mausolea, most notably in Ravenna.¹⁵ In each instance, the cross, as signifier of Christ, presides over the entire cosmos,



Figure 6.4 Detail of the cupola mosaic from the baptistry of San Giovanni in fonte, Naples, early fifth century.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.

including the space occupied by the viewer below, reminding viewers that religious ritual and devotion are made manifest to Christ, the divine, cosmic witness.

In the case of Albenga, the *chi-rho* almost certainly played a central role in the baptismal liturgy. From late fourth- and early fifth-century catecheses, including those of Ambrose in nearby Milan,¹⁶ we know that catechumens faced west inside the baptistry as they renounced Satan, then turned east – the direction of the mosaic at Albenga – while making a confession to the Trinity.¹⁷ The catechumens inside the Albenga baptistry would have faced this *chi-rho* composition while standing in the baptismal font, approximately 0.9 meters below the floor level,¹⁸ giving them a clear sight-line of the barrel-vault mosaic as they offered their Trinitarian confessions.

The *chi-rho* emblem they would have viewed in the niche renders the nature of the Trinity as abstract symbol, but the blue mandorla emanating from the center of the *chi-rho*, as well as the elements surrounding the monogram, further accentuate Trinitarian allusions. Like the arms of the *chi-rho*, the blue mandorla consists of three distinct yet unified concentric rings composed of blue glass tesserae that grow darker in hue the closer they get to the ring of doves and starry sky. This Trinitarian motif occurs elsewhere in the sixth century, such as in the dome mosaic over the high altar at Santa Maria della Croce in Casarano (Figure 6.5), where the central golden cross is surrounded by three distinct fields of gradient-blue tesserae, transitioning from a lighter, aquamarine hue to an increasingly dark lapis color in the outermost ring. The same motif appears less conspicuously at San Vitale in Ravenna (Figure 6.6), where the angels on the north and south walls of the presbyterium are shown holding a *clipeus* with a jeweled cross, from whose

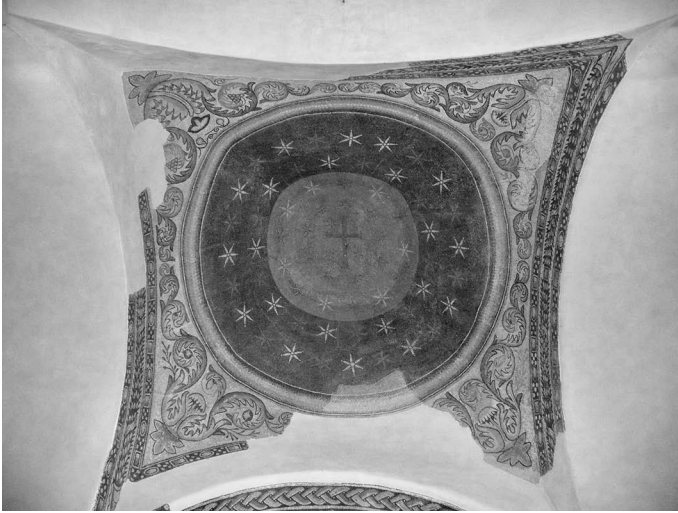


Figure 6.5 Cupola mosaic over the altar of Santa Maria della Croce, Casarano, fifth century.
Photo: Nathan Dennis.



Figure 6.6 Detail of the south side of the presbyterium inside San Vitale, Ravenna, 540s.
Photo: Nathan Dennis.

arms hang double *omegas* rather than *alpha* and *omega*, most likely alluding to the eschatological, apocalyptic rendering of Christ Cosmocrator in the apse (Figure 6.7), where he is shown holding a scroll with the seven seals from Revelation. The angels' cross is encased within a field of blue tesserae rendered as concentric



Figure 6.7 Apse of San Vitale, Ravenna, 540s.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.

circles that grow darker toward the outer edges. Even in the apse mosaic of Christ seated on the *orbis mundi*, the gradient blue tesserae of the sphere are differentiated by three distinct shades of blue glass.

At least two sixth-century literary descriptions, roughly contemporary with the Albenga baptistery, have survived, each describing a composition similar to Albenga's gradient orb design but in the Byzantine East. Choricus of Gaza, in his *Laudatio Marciani*, describes the church of St. Sergius in Gaza, noting that the porch contained a sculpted relief of concentric circles, the central one bearing "the symbol of the Saviour's Passion."¹⁹ And John of Gaza, in his ekphrasis on a fresco he saw in the winter baths of either Gaza or Antioch, describes a complex circular diagram whose outer ring was divided into four compartments with an assortment of personifications related to the seasons.²⁰ Based on John's description and Carolina Cupane's visual reconstruction of the fresco, the center of the composition included a tripartite group of concentric circles, at the center of which appeared a cross whose arms transgressed the borders of each circle.²¹ Moreover, the language that John uses to glorify God emphasizes circularity, rotation, and dynamic movement. He writes,

Creator of everything, guardian, God-born,²² leader of the universe, spiraling time celebrates your self-generative birth with song, [you who are the] wise root of life; for you rotate around in a distributing circle, an axial, God-containing vortex, and you watch over the rudder of life regenerated.²³

At the same moment that sixth-century churches were developing a visual repertoire for nonfigural, abstract expressions of the Trinity, they were also beginning

to apply the repertoire to a new figural vocabulary for communicating Christ's role within the Trinity, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean and Levant. This can be seen most famously in the mid-sixth-century apse mosaic of the Transfiguration at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai, as well as the much simpler cross in the soffit above Christ's head (Figure 6.8). Both elements of the mosaic composition contain the motif of a gradient-blue mandorla. For the central composition of the apse, however, the Incarnate Christ has replaced the more abstract symbols of the cross or *chi-rho*. For the Transfiguration scene, the blue rings emanate outward from the body of Christ – though at Sinai they progress from darker to lighter blue at the edges of the mandorla – and the rings of the mandorla are permeated by beams of white-silver light.²⁴ As several scholars have noted, the numerology inherent in the beams of the mandorla and the subject of the composition – the Transfiguration, which is a liminal moment when Christ's humanity and divinity are expressed simultaneously – point to a Trinitarian

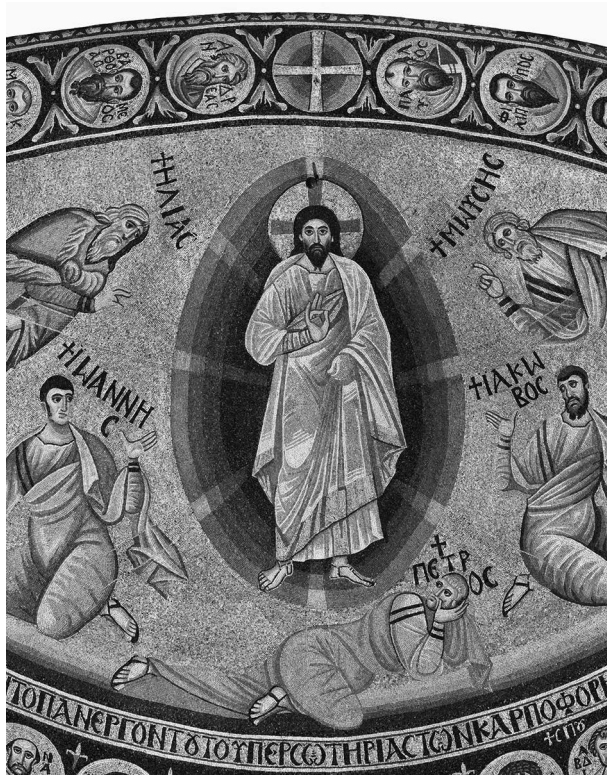


Figure 6.8 Detail of the Transfiguration of Christ from the apse of the main basilica at St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai, ca. 548–565.

Photo: By permission of St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt, and the Centro di Conservazione Archeologia, Rome, Italy. Courtesy of Araldo De Luca and Roberto Nardi.

context for the apse.²⁵ The composition, however, is not simply Trinitarian; it is also *perichoretic*. The rings of the mandorla naturally evoke a circular, rotational movement with their distinct colors blending into one another, and the rays of light emanating from Christ transgress the boundaries of each ring, as do the very feet of Christ at the bottom of the mandorla. All of this suggests an interpenetrative, fluid movement of divine persons, not unlike the arms of the *chi-rho* in the Albenga mosaic.

Also in the sixth century, the same motif of a blue, permeable mandorla was translated into smaller, more portable media. A fragment of a double-sided icon at Mt. Sinai (Figure 6.9), which Kurt Weitzmann dated to the seventh century, shows

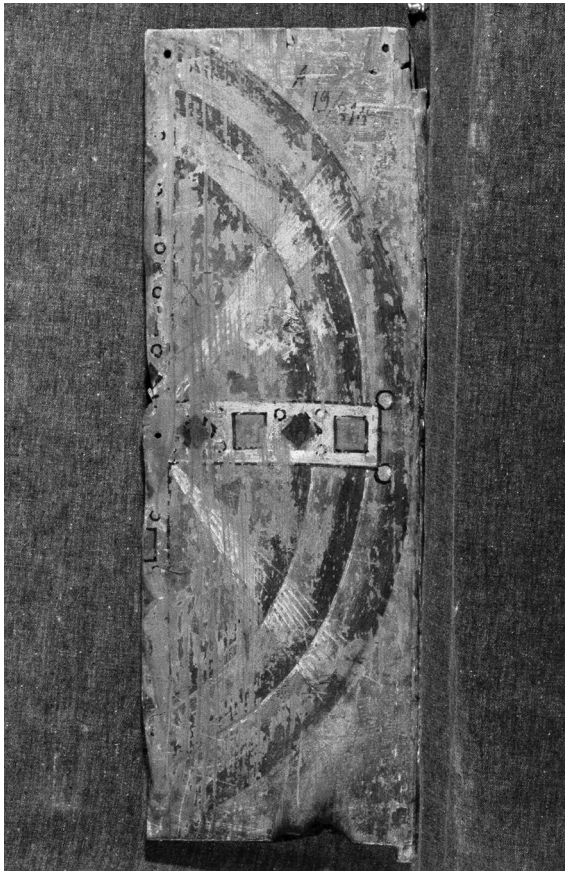


Figure 6.9 Double-sided icon of the Prophet Elijah and a jeweled cross within a mandorla, ca. seventh century. Mt. Sinai, St. Catherine's Monastery.

Photo: By permission of St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expeditions to Mt. Sinai.

a jeweled cross, whose arms transgress the lines of the tripartite blue mandorla that encircle it, a theme repeated by the beams of white light projecting outward from the center of the cross.²⁶ The highlights on the mandorla activate a sense of reflective shimmer, and the radiant beams further accentuate the illusion of movement, as though an illuminated aura rotates around the cross, creating a diagram of Trinitarian interpenetration that parallels the composition inside the Albenga baptistery.

Heavenly haloes and the gods of light

Thomas Mathews has attributed the advent of gradient-blue or -green mandorlas in *Maiestas Domini* iconography or other scenes of Christian epiphany to the appropriation of Central Asian Buddhist iconography, which began using similar mandorlas in devotional images of the Buddha several centuries before Christianity had established a visual vocabulary.²⁷ Although eastern Christians likely had contact with Buddhists and Buddhist iconography in Late Antiquity via the Silk Route, there is no need to look so far afield for the influence of gradient-blue mandorlas and nimbi in the early Christian West, or even most of the Byzantine East for that matter. The iconography of Apollo in the Greco-Roman pantheon often included a gradient-blue nimbus, such as the fresco of a seated Apollo from the House of Ariadne at Pompeii (Figure 6.10). Similar iconographical features continued to appear well into the fourth century and all across the Mediterranean, such as in the House of Aion at Paphos on Cyprus, where a large fourth-century floor mosaic contains a narrative scene of the competition between Apollo and Marsyas (Figure 6.11). The seated Apollo is given a gradient-blue nimbus, not unlike the Pompeian fresco or the mosaic mandorla of the Albenga baptistery niche. On the same pavement at Paphos, another scene shows the presentation of Dionysos to Silenus. Both the child Dionysos sitting in Hermes' lap and the personification of *Theogonia*, the genealogy of the gods, are given gradient-blue nimbi. Elsewhere on the mosaic pavement, Zeus, Athena, Thetis, and the oceanic nymph Doris are given similar blue nimbi. Greco-Roman deities were frequently given nimbi to contextualize them as divine, but Apollo, as god of light, was an obvious choice for an iconographical attribute of radiant, emanating light, and the blue color of the halo was likely a reference to Apollo's dominion over the light of the earth.

Possibly the earliest adoption of the gradient-blue nimbus in Christianity appears in Santa Costanza in Rome. In the eastern niche of the transverse axis (Figures 6.12–6.13), a mosaic of the *Traditio Legis* is depicted, with a youthful, beardless Christ standing in a paradisiacal landscape and offering a scroll to St. Peter that reads, “DOMINUS LEGEM DAT,” as St. Paul watches on from the left. Christ's nimbus is rendered in three distinct shades of blue tesserae in expanding, concentric rings. Across the mausoleum in the western niche of the lateral axis is a scene of Christ Cosmocrator (Figure 6.14), seated on the *orbis mundi* and handing either a set of keys or a codex to St. Peter, who approaches



Figure 6.10 Detail of Apollo from a wall fresco removed from the House of Ariadne at Pompeii, first century CE. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.

from the left.²⁸ Unlike in the eastern niche, this Christ appears older and wears a beard, but he too is framed by a gradient-blue nimbus of three distinct shades of blue tesserae that grow darker as they emanate outward. As Christians developed their own iconographical standards for depicting Christ in the fourth century, with monumental commissions becoming increasingly common as the empire slowly converted to the new religion, workshops and designers surely looked to the iconography of the Greco-Roman deities of light – Apollo and Helios – for inspiration in depicting Christ as the true light and better securing his position in supplanting the old pantheon of pagan gods.

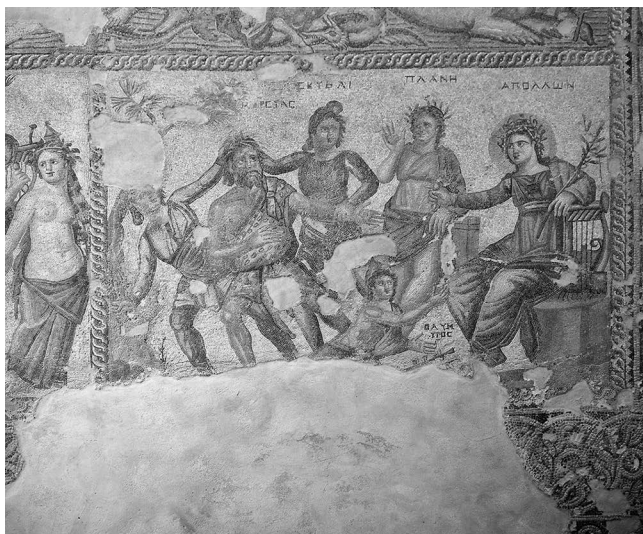


Figure 6.11 Detail of the competition between Apollo and Marsyas from the House of Aion, Paphos, fourth century.

Photo: Courtesy of Santiago Cordero, used with permission.



Figure 6.12 Apse mosaic from the eastern niche of Santa Costanza, Rome, ca. 350.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.



Figure 6.13 Detail of the eastern apse mosaic at Santa Costanza, Rome, ca. 350.
Photo: Nathan Dennis.



Figure 6.14 Apse mosaic from the western niche of Santa Costanza, Rome, ca. 350.
Photo: Nathan Dennis.

Divine light and heavenly prisms

It is also likely that the Judeo-Christian iconographical tradition of associating divinity with radiant blue light was equally influenced by biblical descriptions of epiphany that included gemstones. In Ex. 24.10, as Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascend Mt. Sinai, they receive a vision of

God himself, under whose feet appears a pavement that resembles sapphire. And in Ezekiel's epiphanic encounter with God, he describes the vault of heaven and the throne of God as resembling sapphire (Ez. 1.26; 10.1). In the New Testament, John's vision in Rev. 21.19 describes one of the foundations of the Heavenly Jerusalem as sapphire. The color blue, therefore, was intimately associated with divine epiphany and mystical visions both in the ancient Near East and throughout the Mediterranean. The adoption of the blue nimbus or mandorla in early Christian art would have automatically signaled to a late antique audience that Christ, God, or, in the case of Albenga, the Trinity itself, was associated with divinity and had been grafted into the existing visual vocabulary of epiphany in the ancient Mediterranean world.

The gem at the center of the *chi-rho* monogram at Albenga (Figure 6.15) further accentuates the allusion to epiphany and heavenly light. It seems clear that the designer of the mosaic intended to communicate the visual effect of translucence and light refraction rather than reflection. This is significant. The border of the gem is composed of bright-red tesserae, interspersed on the interior bevel by six darker red tesserae that correspond approximately with the cardinal points of the *chi-rho* monogram. Unlike the imitation gems embedded in the soffit of the window, below the *chi-rho* composition in the barrel vault, the interior body of the gem within the *chi-rho* monogram has not been filled with the same colored tesserae as its outer edges. It appears empty rather than solid. Moreover, the imitation gems in the soffit contain white marble tesserae as highlights to signal the shimmer of light reflected off of the surface of the gems. The *chi-rho* gem, on the other hand, lacks all highlights to communicate reflected light. Instead, it offers the illusion of an unimpeded view of the golden arms of the *chi-rho* underneath,

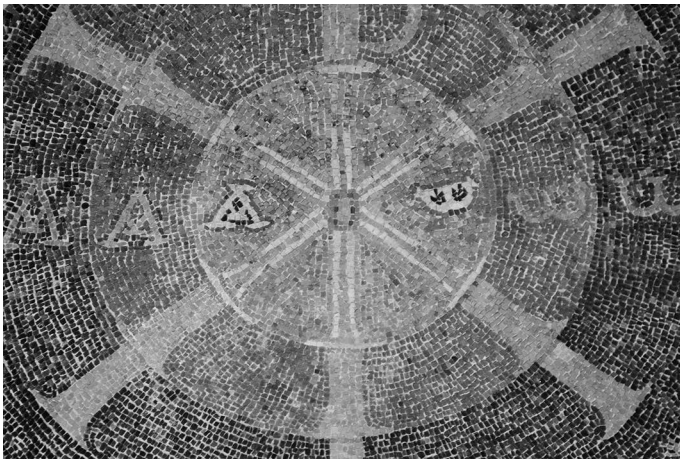


Figure 6.15 Detail of the center of the barrel-vault mosaic from the northeastern niche of the Albenga baptistery, sixth century.

Photo: Nathan Dennis.

suggesting, perhaps, the translucence of something like carnelian, a stone commonly used in Roman signet rings, or a similar red gemstone superimposed over the golden cross arms.²⁹

The placement allows the light at the very center of the cross underneath to radiate outward, albeit filtered through the gem. This is a surprisingly well-adapted visual parallel to early Christian discourse on the Heavenly Jerusalem and its accessibility through the cross of Christ.³⁰ The image of the Heavenly Jerusalem was often associated with a jewel-encrusted cityscape in early Christian iconography, based on the biblical description in Rev. 21, and the practice of adorning reliquaries with gemstones emerged as a sign of the heavenly paradise that martyrs and saints had inherited, and to which the Christian devotee would eventually go after death.³¹ For this reason, imitation jewels are interspersed among the names of the martyrs and saints within the Albenga baptistery. If the gemstone within the *chi-rho* monogram functioned as a synecdoche of what had become standardized iconography of a jeweled eschatological paradise, then the mosaic would have communicated visually the theological trope that heaven is a jewel through which the light of Christ shines upon humanity. In the Trinitarian context of the Albenga mosaic, this could be interpreted as the light of heaven being generated by the cross of Christ and disseminated by the Holy Spirit, as the *chi-rho* arms move outward toward the doves, who are almost certainly the apostles. The doves, in turn, are positioned immediately within the starry sky, as if to suggest that the Great Commission assigned to the apostles by Christ has finally fulfilled the Abrahamic covenant in Gen. 15.5, whereby salvation is offered to all of humanity. Indeed, in John's apocalyptic vision of heaven in Rev. 21.10–11, he even describes the light of God as resembling a rare jewel, and translucent at that.

***Perichoresis* and the creation of Trinitarian space**

Albenga's *chi-rho* monogram was as much theological as it was political. Disputes over the defining characteristics of the Trinity or its individual members dominated much of the theological discourse in Late Antiquity and became a focal point for the first six ecumenical councils between 325 and 681.³² Christian theologians became increasingly preoccupied with discussions of the divine and human nature of Christ, as well as the equal divinity and authority of the Holy Spirit, the relationship that each entity had to God the Father, and the paradox of a Godhead functioning as a singular being consisting of three individual persons. In spite of the centrality of these debates in early Christian literature, representations of and allusions to the Trinity are rare in the formative centuries of Christian art, which makes the Albenga baptistery a unique testimony to early Trinitarian thought at a critical point in the development of Christian orthodoxy.

Few theological debates in early Christianity, however, were as contentious as the fourth- and fifth-century Trinitarian disputes that arose in the midst of the Arian schism. Arius, a presbyter in the church at Alexandria, famously proposed in 319 CE that Christ was created by God the Father *ex nihilo*, the first of God's creation and therefore neither co-eternal nor co-equal among the three persons

of the Trinity. Although the Council of Nicaea in 325 condemned Arianism as a heresy, the theology continued to spread throughout the ancient world, taking root, most notably, among the Germanic Vandals and Ostrogoths, who conquered southern Spain, North Africa, and northern Italy in the fifth century and installed Arianism as the predominant doctrine until Emperor Justinian retook the regions in the mid-sixth century.

To combat the rise and proliferation of Arianism, Orthodox theologians, particularly in the Greek East, began developing a systematic approach to defining the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. Although much of the discourse centered on the essence, or *ousia* (οὐσία), of members of the Trinity, one term came to be associated with the idea of a harmonious, intertwining, and interpenetrative movement between Trinitarian figures, namely *perichoresis*, which literally translates to “rotation” or “proceeding around,” but came to be associated with even a circumambient, permeating, and reciprocal movement unique to the Christian Godhead. The term first appeared in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century,³³ but it was not until the seventh and eighth centuries that the word was transformed into its modern association with a specifically Trinitarian concept by Maximus the Confessor, Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria, and, most importantly, John of Damascus.³⁴ *Perichoresis* eventually became a mental image of the divine persons processing around, between, and even through one another as their identities were paradoxically both unified into a singular Godhead while at the same time maintaining their individuality within a seemingly circular, yet interwoven and suffusive movement. Although the theological nuances of the word *perichoresis* would not appear for another 200 years after the Albenga baptistery was constructed, the incipient ideas that would later define *perichoresis* were already in development among fourth- and fifth-century writers, and those ideas had already found expression within an expanding visual vocabulary in early Christian art. Trinitarian thought in early Christianity had begun to emphasize *perichoresis* long before the term actually settled into its current form. Gregory of Nazianzus, for instance, describes the Trinity as three distinct suns whose intermingling and unification create a singular light source. He then immediately states that when one looks upon the Godhead as the totality of that intermingled light, one sees a singular entity, but if each entity is examined individually, then three distinct beings are discerned.³⁵

The word *perichoresis*, of course, is Greek, and it was not introduced into Latin until the twelfth century, when Burgundio of Pisa translated John of Damascus’ *De fide orthodoxa* into Latin, rendering the word *perichoresis* as *circumincensio*.³⁶ Long before the twelfth century, however, clerics from the Latin West would almost certainly have been familiar with Trinitarian *perichoresis*, either in its original Greek formulation or at the very least the relational movement between divine persons that the word communicated. The First Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381 was convened largely as a forum to discuss and subsequently establish an orthodox position on the nature of the Trinity. The council was well attended by Western bishops or their proxies, and the council’s decisions were

distributed widely throughout Byzantine and Western Roman bishoprics. Moreover, this Trinitarian orthodoxy was affirmed at subsequent ecumenical councils in the fifth and sixth centuries. Latin theologians, such as Augustine, were also well aware of the philosophical principles of Trinitarian orthodoxy that were being promulgated in the East during the late fourth and fifth centuries, even if they used neither *perichoresis* nor *circumincessio* to describe the divine relationship. In Book 9 of *De Trinitate*, for example, Augustine sees not merely the *imago Dei* in humanity, but the *imago Trinitatis*. Humanity was created not in the image of God but in the image of the entire Trinity, with the human mind, knowledge, and love (*mens, notitia, and amor*) as imprints of this Trinitarian image. And within the mind itself, he proposes memory, intellect, and will (*memoria, intellectus, and voluntas*) as not only further evidence for this Trinitarian image, but also an example of how each is interwoven and interpenetrative, distinct in its individual composition but sharing the same essence of the mind.³⁷ Although a specific term did not exist in the West for Trinitarian movement as interpenetration and permeability, Latin theologians in Late Antiquity nevertheless found ways to visualize it.

By at least the late fourth century, the descriptive language of transgressing permeable boundaries in Trinitarian or otherwise *perichoretic* movement was being applied to processional, bodily movement within baptismal space, as catechumens walked around the baptismal font and were beckoned to imagine themselves as new Adams and Eves reentering a prelapsarian Eden, whose gates had been reopened through the waters of baptism.³⁸ Baptisteries in early Christianity were not merely architectural constructs designed to facilitate the ritual of baptism. They were both the actual and metaphysical gateways for Christian initiates entering the Church, understood symbolically as the body of Christ and its attendant faith community and physically as the primary location of Christian cult adjacent to the baptistery. Fourth- and fifth-century mystagogical catecheses frequently describe the ritual space of baptism as a mystical union between the terrestrial world, delineated by its physical properties and perceived through the carnal senses, and a celestial existence characterized by intangibility and perceived only through the transformation of vision.³⁹ In *De mysteriis*, Ambrose of Milan warns his initiates of the unreliability of the carnal senses, urging them to adopt spiritual vision to perceive invisible things inside the baptistery. He writes,

Therefore, do not believe in your bodily eyes alone. The invisible is indeed more visible, for that which is seen corporeally is temporal, whereas the other is eternal. That which is not comprehended by the eyes, but rather is perceived by the soul and the mind, is yet more visible.⁴⁰

In *Procatechesis*, Cyril of Jerusalem beckons his catechumens to the baptismal font by encouraging them to see with spiritual eyes the gates of paradise opened for them.⁴¹ And Gregory of Nyssa, in his catechetical homily *In diem luminum*, tells his catechumens that,

No longer will the flaming sword surrounding paradise rage, making the entrance inaccessible to those approaching it. Indeed, everything is transformed

into joy for the inheritors of sin. Paradise and even heaven itself have become accessible to humanity. Creation, both terrestrial and celestial, once at variance with itself, is united in friendship; and humanity, now a living song unto God, joins the angels in harmonious music.⁴²

Mystagogical catecheses were intended to educate catechumens on the doctrines of the Church and significance of baptism, but they were also designed to facilitate mystical visions within the baptistery. Visions of paradise and even glimpses of the divine were thought to be attainable by those whose spiritual senses had been activated to perceive metaphysical realities within the baptistery.⁴³ Catechumens, therefore, were thought to stand upon the threshold of material and immaterial realities as they prepared for baptism, a locus where divine presence transcended the terrestrial world and yet, paradoxically, was thought to be simultaneously immanent within the materials and substances that defined the space as holy.

The rite of baptism was performed in a temporal moment that had eternal implications. Entrance into and participation within the corporal Christian community through the waters of baptism was but a reflection of an eternal community that dwelt incorporeally in the presence of God. This liminal space allowed catechumens to pierce the veil that separated heaven and earth and glimpse the eschatological paradise that awaited them after death. In this way, earthly and heavenly spaces were imagined as interwoven and reciprocal inside the baptistery, not unlike the persons of the Trinity, who are abstracted into the repeating *chi-rho* monogram of the Albenga baptistery; and not unlike the catechumens themselves, whose carnal senses were to be transformed into spiritual perception and their minds elevated to perceive the immaterial, heavenly reality promised to them after death, even as their corporeal bodies were rooted in an earthly context. Therefore, an image of the Trinity in *perichoretic* form or discussions of the nature of the Trinity in the baptismal liturgy may have functioned as a complementary metaphor for the construction of baptismal space, where human bodies in rotational, processional movement around the font and within an imagined temporal and spatial divide imitated the swirling, interpenetrative movement of the Godhead.

Agency and ritual in Trinitarian space

In recent years, scholars across a variety of historical disciplines have examined the active agency of sacred space,⁴⁴ in large measure a response to the legacy of Marcel Mauss' and Alfred Gell's anthropological models of inanimate agency in human cult and ritual.⁴⁵ Among Byzantinists, in particular, this burgeoning field of inquiry has challenged traditional positivistic definitions of animate agency and revised the historical and theological context in which medieval viewers understood sacred space as living presence rather than a static, passive vessel for sanctity or merely a stage on which the more obvious agency of ritual and human action occurred. This reevaluation of the design and function of sacred space has provided a framework for understanding interactive, reciprocal relationships between tangible bodies and intangible or ephemeral phenomena that were

actualized within the architectural setting of sacred space or embodied within its attendant furnishings, iconography, and even the materiality of the space itself. Sacred space, then, could function as an equal partner with human agency in ritual performance, creating an intersection of divine and human initiative. As a perceived animate presence, sacred space could therefore facilitate or even manipulate the actions and movements of the human participants within.

It is more often the accoutrements of sacred space, and most notably Christian icons, that are seen as the animate (or animating) force in these divine-human interactions,⁴⁶ but the totality of sacred space itself can, as Alexei Lidov has argued, function as a “spatial icon,” whereby heavenly visions can be created or divine presence projected through both the material and immaterial elements of spatial design, whether physical icons of divine or saintly figures integral to the space or more ephemeral, sensory agents such as light, sound, scent, taste, or the effects of haptic interactions with material forms within the space.⁴⁷ In this theological construct, the bodily presence and movement of human devotees are interwoven with the divine agency embodied within the space, each presence permeating and interpenetrating the other as terrestrial and celestial realities collide in a singular locus.

In a baptistery such as Albenga, the Trinity becomes a spatial icon, an agent capable of interacting relationally and reciprocally with the catechumen. And the catechumen’s ability to transgress the permeable membrane of terrestrial and celestial reality was akin to Trinitarian *perichoresis*, which further imprinted upon the catechumen the image of the Trinity. Within early Christian baptisteries, where measurable time and defined space collided with visions of paradise that eluded quantification and confinement, initiates approached this sense of *perichoresis* as they imagined themselves weaving in and out of material and immaterial realities. In the Albenga baptistery, this human *perichoresis*, consisting of both actual, corporeal movement and visions of an immaterial reality, found its complement in the *imago Trinitatis*, as the swirling, interpenetrative bodies of the holy Trinity became manifest in a visual *perichoretic* diagram above the catechumens’ heads.

The *chi-rho* mosaic inside the Albenga baptistery provides the only known pictorial complement in early Christianity to this doctrine of liminality for heavenly, immaterial bodies that was mirrored in the physical movement and discourse of catechumens occupying the baptismal space below. It is, therefore, one of the most important pieces of pictorial evidence for the integration of Trinitarian and baptismal theology in the late antique Mediterranean.

Notes

- 1 On the baptistery’s date, see Olof Brandt, *Battisteri oltre la pianta: Gli alzati di nove battisteri paleocristiani in Italia* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2012), 315–316; and Brandt et al., “Photomodelling as an Instrument for Stratigraphic Analysis of Standing Buildings: The Baptistery of Albenga.” *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 90 (2014), 265.
- 2 On the chemical composition of the tesserae, both original and from the 1900–1901 restoration, see Enrico Franceschi et al., “Il mosaico del battistero di Albenga. Indagini

- in fluorescenza X (XRF) e altre tecniche non invasive e micro invasive.” In *Ravenna musiva*. Cesare Fiori and Mariangela Vandini, eds. (Bologna: Ante Quem, 2010), 483–496.
- 3 Pietro Toesca, *La pittura e la miniatura nella Lombardia* (Milan: U. Hoepli, 1912), 22.
 - 4 The mosaic tesserae from the inscription had all but disappeared by 1898 when Russian scholar Dmitrij Vlasévič Ajnalov first visited and recorded the martyrs’ names that were still visible – cf. Ajnalov, “Мозаики древней крещальни въ Альбенгв.” *Византийский Временник* 8 (1901), 519; Marcenaro, “Dmitrij Vlasévič Ajnalov: il ‘Viaggio in Italia’ di uno storico dell’arte russa sul finire dell’Ottocento.” *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale d’Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte* 26 (2004), 189–213; and idem, “Ajanlov, Wilpert, Raimondi, Tabanelli e il mosaico di Albenga. Un acquerello nelle collezioni del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana.” *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 87–88 (2011), 285–316. Eugène Müntz, writing a decade earlier, could decipher even less of the inscription – cf. Müntz, “Notes sur les mosaïques chrétiennes de l’Italie, IX. Les mosaïques de Siponte, de Capoue, de Vercel, d’Olona, et d’Albenga.” *Revue archéologique* 17 (1891), 85–86. The inscription, therefore, was the most heavily restored portion of the niche, making it the most problematic element for reconstructing the original sixth-century composition. The *chi-rho* arrangement of the barrel vault, on the other hand, was surprisingly well preserved, according to Ajnalov, as well as Alfredo d’Andrade in 1885 and conservator Edoardo Marchionni in 1900 – cf. Ajnalov, 516–525; and Marcenaro, “Il Battistero di Albenga: storia di un restauro,” 207, 212.
 - 5 On the mosaic inscriptions within the baptistery, see Danilo Mazzoleni, “L’iscrizione del Battistero di Albenga.” *Rivista di Studi Liguri* 53 (1987), 257–267.
 - 6 Toesca, 23.
 - 7 Cf. Valeria Sciarretta, *Il Battistero di Albenga* (Ravenna: A. Longo, 1977); Mario Marcenaro, “Alfredo d’Andrade e il mosaico del Battistero di Albenga: un restauro scientifico del primo novecento.” *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 1 (1987), 203–242; idem, “Il Battistero di Albenga: storia di un restauro,” 179–242; Francisca Pallarés, “Alcune considerazioni sulle anfore del Battistero di Albenga.” *Rivista di Studi Liguri* 53 (1987), 269–306; Nicolò Palmarini, “Simbolismo e gematria nel mosaico del Battistero di Albenga,” *ibid.*, 243–256; Mario Mirabella Roberti, “Le strutture del Battistero di Albenga,” *ibid.*, 173–178; Marcenaro, “L’opificio delle pietre dure in Liguria (1899–1900): il Battistero di Albenga.” *OPD Restauro* 1, 2nd Series (1989), 223–238; idem, *Il Battistero paleocristiano di Albenga* (Recco: Le Mani, 1994); Tiziano Mannoni and Aurora Cagnana, “Archeologia dei monumenti. L’analisi stratigrafica del battistero paleocristiano di Albenga (SV).” *Archeologia dell’architettura* 1 (1996), 83–100; Marcenaro, “Il mosaico del Battistero di Albenga. Interpretazione iconografica, iconologica e restauro.” In *Atti del III Colloquio dell’Associazione italiana per lo studio e la conservazione del mosaico*, Bordighera, 6–10 dicembre 1995. Federico Guidobaldi and Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi, eds. (Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 1996), 39–62; Alessandro Frondoni, “Recenti restauri e indagini al battistero di Albenga.” In *L’edificio battesimale in Italia*, vol. 2. Daniela Gandolfi, ed. (Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2001), 844–865; Cagnana et al., “Metodi di datazione delle opere murarie dei battisteri paleocristiani,” in *ibid.*, 875–888; Costanza Fusconi and Roberto Sabelli, “Il Battistero di Albenga: indagini per la conservazione e proposte d’intervento.” In *Albenga città episcopale* (Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2007), 599–636; Daniela Gandolfi and Alessandro Frondoni, “Recenti indagini archeologiche nel battistero ‘monumentale’ di Albenga. Note di scavo,” in *ibid.*, 555–598; Silvia Lusuadi Siena and Furio Sacchi, “Gli edifici battesimali di Milano e di Albenga,” in *ibid.*, 677–704; Marcenaro, “Il Battistero di Albenga: tutela, ricerca e restauro tra otto e novecento,” in *ibid.*, 637–674; idem, “I ‘due’ battisteri di Albenga: alcune considerazioni.” In *La cristianizzazione in Italia tra tardoantico ed altomedioevo*, vol. 1. Rosa Maria Bonacasa Carra and Emma Vitale,

- eds. (Palermo: Carlo Saladino Editore, 2007), 709–744; idem, “Restauro, ripristino e recupero esterno tra Otto e Novecento: da Alfredo D’Andrade a Nino Lambaoglia.” In *La Cattedrale di Albenga*. Josepha Costa Restagno and Maria Celeste Paoli Maineri, eds. (Albenga: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2007), 451–473; Daniela Gandolfi and Mario Marcenaro, “Albenga, battistero ‘monumentale’: una nuova scoperta.” *Temporis signa* 3 (2008), 199–202; Olof Brandt, “L’enigmata muratura ‘B’ del Battistero di Albenga.” In *Marmoribus vestita*, vol. 1. Olof Brandt and Philippe Pergola, eds. (Vatican City: PIAC, 2011), 263–286; Marcenaro, “Ajnalov, Wilpert, Raimondi, Tabanelli”; and Brandt, *Battisteri oltre la pianta*, 272–317.
- 8 Marcenaro, *Il Battistero paleocristiano di Albenga*, 129–191; and idem, “Il mosaico del Battistero di Albenga.”
 - 9 For a summary of the current state of research of the *imago Trinitatis*, particularly in the writings of Augustine, see Paola Marone, “L’uomo *imago trinitatis* nella produzione letteraria di Agostino.” In *La Trinità*, Atti del II Convegno nazionale dell’Università di Roma “Tor Vergata” (Roma 26–28 maggio, 2011) (forthcoming), 229–337; preprint copy available at <http://mondodomani.org/teologia/marone2011.htm>.
 - 10 Caution should be taken here not to confuse the meaning of *perichoresis* and its verbal form, *περιχωρέω*, with the similar-sounding, but quite distinct, *περιχορεύω* or *χορεύω*, from which the word *choros* (χορός, “dance”) is derived. Some contemporary writers, especially of popular theology, have confused the two terms, offering a somewhat romanticized analogy of choreographed, dance-like movement to the Trinity in medieval discourse, but this is a philological fallacy, even if the idea of circular movement is inherent in each cognate.
 - 11 On *perichoresis* in early Christian theology, see August Deneffe, “Perichoresis, circumincesso, circuminseio: Eine terminologische Untersuchung.” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 47, no. 4 (1923), 497–532; Leonard Prestige, “περιχωρέω and περιχορήσις in the Fathers.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1928), 242–252; Julian Stead, “Perichoresis in the Christological Chapters of the *De Trinitate* of Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria.” *Dominican Studies* 6 (1953), 12–20; Peter Stemmer, “Perichorese. Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs.” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 27 (1983), 9–55; Verna Harrison, “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1991), 53–65; John P. Egan, “Primal Cause and Trinitarian Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen’s *Oration* 31.14.” *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993), 21–28; idem, “Toward Trinitarian Perichoresis: Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 31.14.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39, no. 1 (1994), 83–93; Daniel F. Stramara, Jr., “Gregory of Nyssa’s Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 52, no. 3 (1998), 257–263; Elena Vishnevskaya, “Perichoresis in the Context of Divinization: Maximus the Confessor’s Vision of a ‘Blessed and Most Holy Embrace.’” PhD Diss., Drew University, 2004; Emmanuel Durand, *La périchorèse des personnes divines: Immanence mutuelle, réciprocité et communion* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005), 19–38; Dănuț Mănăstireanu, “Perichoresis and the Early Christian Doctrine of God.” *Archæus* 11–12 (2007–2008), 61–93; Emmanuel Durand, “Perichoresis: A Key Concept for Balancing Trinitarian Theology.” In *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology: Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology*. Giulio Maspero and Robert J. Wozniak, eds. (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 177–192; Brian T. Scalise, “Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen and Maximus the Confessor.” *Eleutheria* 2, no. 1 (2012), 58–76; and Charles C. Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood: God, Christ, and Salvation in John of Damascus* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2015).
 - 12 On the role of paradise and epiphany in early Christian baptism, see Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 19–113; idem, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*. Wulstan Hibberd, trans. (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), 22–29; Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions*

- (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 177–213; and Nathan S. Dennis, “Performing Paradise in the Early Christian Baptistry: Art, Liturgy, and the Transformation of Vision.” PhD Diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2016; and idem, “Living Water, Living Presence: Animating Sacred Space in the Early Christian Baptistry.” In *Holy Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*. Alexei Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Theoria, 2017), 89–119.
- 13 For epiphany in ancient and early Christian ritualized space, see Elpidius Pax, *Ἐπιφάνεια. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie* (Munich: K. Zink, 1955); F. E. Brenk, “Greek Epiphanies and Paul on the Road to Damaskos.” In *The Notion of “Religion” in Comparative Research*. Ugo Bianchi, ed. (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 1994), 415–424; Margaret M. Mitchell, “Epiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianity.” *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004), 183–204; Jaś Elsner, and Ian Rutherford, eds., *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and John R. Clarke, “Constructing the Spaces of Epiphany in Ancient Greek and Roman Visual Culture.” In *Text, Image and Christians in a Graeco-Roman World*. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek, eds. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 257–279.
 - 14 Palmarini, 243–256; Marcenaro, *Il Battistero paleocristiano di Albenga*, 127–191; and idem, “Il mosaico del Battistero di Albenga.”
 - 15 See, for instance, the central dome of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia or the apse of Sant’Apollinare in Classe.
 - 16 From at least the mid-fifth century, Albenga was almost certainly subject to or significantly influenced by the see of Milan, for Bishop Eusebius of Milan’s letter to Pope Leo I, dated 451, mentions a certain Quintius, bishop of Albenga (Roman Albingaunum), who had signed the letter from the Synod of Milan in 451 that declared the Christological teachings of Nestorius and Eutyches heretical. Other bishops from Piemonte, including nearby Tortona and Piacenza, also signed the letter, showing the reach of Milan’s regional influence over northeastern Italy. On the reach of Milan’s theological influence in early Christianity, see Alžběta Ž. Filipová, “Circulation of Blood, Clay, and Ideas: The Distribution of Milanese Relics in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries.” *Convivium* 1, no. 1 (2014), 64–75. Marcenaro has also made a connection between Albenga and Milan based on the names of the martyrs in the Albenga baptistry and their apparent relics, which were likely imported from Milan – cf. Marcenaro, *Il Battistero paleocristiano di Albenga*, 152ff.; and idem, “Il mosaico del Battistero di Albenga.”
 - 17 Ambrose of Milan, *De mysteriis*. With Matt. 28.19 as the precedent, baptismal confessions to the Trinity had become common practice in Mediterranean churches by at least the second century. The role of the Trinity in baptism, however, would grow increasingly prominent, so that initiates were often baptized three times, baptismal exorcisms were performed in threes, and the water of the baptismal font would at times be blessed in triplicate.
 - 18 Cf. Marcenaro, *Il Battistero paleocristiano di Albenga*, 87–126, for a full discussion of the interior architecture. For the design and depth of the font, see Sebastian Ristow, *Frühchristliche Baptisterien* (Münster: Aschendorffsche, 1998), 172, cat. no. 326; and Brandt et al., fig. 24.
 - 19 Choricus of Gaza, *Laudatio Marciani*, 1.17ff, in Cyril Mango, ed., *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 313–1453* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 60ff.
 - 20 John of Gaza, *Descriptio Tabulae Mundi*. Greek text and/or commentary in Paul Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius: Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit* (Leipzig, Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1912), 135–212; Gerhard Krahmer, “De tabula mundi ab Joanne Gazaeo descripta.” PhD Diss., Martin-Luther-Universität

- Halle-Wittenberg, 1920; Glanville Downey, "John of Gaza and the Mosaic of Ge and the Karpoi." In *Antioch-on-the-Orontes, II*, vol. 2. Richard Stillwell, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1933–36), 205–212; George M. A. Hanfmann, "The Seasons in John of Gaza's *Tabula Mundi*." *Latomus* 3, no. 2 (1939), 111–118; Carolina Cupane, "Il ΚΟΣΜΙΚΟΣ ΠΙΝΑΞ di Giovanni di Gaza. Una proposta di ricostruzione." *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 28 (1979), 195–207; Luc Renaut, "La description d'une croix cosmique par Jean de Gaza, poète palestinien du VI^e siècle." In *Iconographica: Mélanges offerts à Piotr Skubiszewski, Professeur à l'Université de Poitiers et à l'Université de Varsovie*. Robert Favreau and Marie-Hélène Debiès, eds. (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, 1999), 211–220; idem, "Les déclamations d'ekphraseis: une réalité vivante à Gaza au VI^e siècle." In *Gaza dans l'Antiquité Tardive: archéologie, rhétorique et histoire*. Catherine Saliou, ed. (Salerno: Helios, 2005), 197–220; Rina Talgam, "Johannes of Gaza's *Tabula Mundi* Revisited." In *Between Judaism and Christianity: Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Mati Meyer, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 91–118; and Tomasz Polański, "Gerhard Krahmer: A Forgotten Latin Commentator of John of Gaza's *Tabula Mundi*." *Classica Cracoviensia* 14 (2011), 267–286.
- 21 Cupane, 207.
- 22 The word "θεγενές," in addition to John's later use of "τόκον," both related to birthing imagery, suggests a fixed point of origin for God (or Christ) rather than the orthodox position of eternity and co-equality among persons of the Trinity. Friedländer, 167, n. 19, attempted to reconcile this problem by suggesting that John was addressing God the Father and God the Son separately, but the syntax of the passage makes this unlikely and offers no satisfactory explanation for the choice of birthing imagery.
- 23 John of Gaza, vv. 19–23: "Παγγενέτωρ, ἐπίουρε, θεγενές, ὄραμε κόσμου, σὸν τόκον αὐτοτέλεστον ἐλὶξ χρόνος ὕμνοπολεῦει, ῥίξα σοφῇ βίοτοιο· σὺ γάρ νωμήτορι κύκλωι ἄζονῃν στροφάλλεγα θεγδόχον ἀμφιελίσσεις, καὶ βιοτῆς οἴκη παλιννόστοιο φυλάσσεις," Friedländer, 137; and Renaut, "La description d'une croix cosmique," 213.
- 24 A similar, albeit more restrained, composition appears on the back of the lid of the so-called Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary, produced, most likely, in Jerusalem in the sixth or seventh century and now at the Vatican. Cf. Gabriele Mietke, "Wundertätige Pilgerandenken, Reliquien und ihr Bildschmuck." In *Byzanz. Die Macht der Bilder*. Michael Brandt and Arne Effenberger, eds. (Hildesheim: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1998), 40–55; Bruno Reudenbach, "Reliquien von Orten: Ein frühchristliches Reliquiart als Gedächtnisort." In *Reliquiare im Mittelalter*. Bruno Reudenbach and Gia Toussaint, eds. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), 21–41; idem, "Loca sancta: Zur materiellen Übertragung der heiligen Stätten." In *Jerusalem, du Schöne: Vorstellungen und Bilder einer heiligen Stadt*. Bruno Reudenbach, ed. (Bern: Lang, 2008), 9–32; Herbert L. Kessler, "Arca arcarum: Nested Boxes and the Dynamics of Sacred Experience." *Codex Aquilarensis* 30 (2014), 83–108; Beate Fricke, "Tales from Stones, Travels through Time: Narrative and Vision in the Casket from the Vatican." *West 86th* 21, no. 2 (2014), 230–250; and Derek Krueger, "Liturgical Time and Holy Land Reliquaries in Early Byzantium." In *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*. Cynthia Hahn and Holger Klein, eds. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2015), 111–131.
- 25 Cf. Kurt Weitzmann, "The Mosaic in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110, no. 6 (1966), 392–405; Fernanda de' Maffei, "L'Unigenito consustanziale al Padre nel programma trinitario dei perduti mosaici del bema della Dormizione di Nicea e il Cristo trasfigurato del Sinai. II." *Storia dell'arte* 46 (1982), 185–200; and Jerzy Miziołek, "Transfiguratio Domini in the Apse at Mount Sinai and the Symbolism of Light." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 53 (1990), 42–60.

- 26 Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons. Vol. I* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 42–43, cat. no. B.17; and idem, “The Mosaic in St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai.”
- 27 Thomas F. Mathews, “The Early Armenian Iconographic Program of the Ējmiacin Gospel (Erevan, Matendaran MS 2374, *olim* 229).” In *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*. Nina G. Garsoïan, et al., eds. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 208–209; and idem, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 116–118.
- 28 Both niche mosaics have been heavily restored – cf. Jürgen J. Rasch and Archim Arbeiter, *Das Mausoleum der Constantina in Rom* (Mainz: Zabern, 2007).
- 29 On the use of gemstones in Late Antiquity, see Jeffrey Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007); and Chris Entwistle and Noël Adams, eds., *Gems of Heaven: Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity, c. AD 200–600* (London: British Museum, 2012). For early Christian allegorical interpretations of gemstones, see Christel Meier, *Gemma Spiritualis: Methode und Gebrauch der Edelsteinallegorese vom frühen Christentum bis ins 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977).
- 30 On early Christian exegesis of the Heavenly Jerusalem and pictorial representations, see Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Rome: Herder, 1987).
- 31 For a summary of gems and the Heavenly Jerusalem in early Christian and medieval thought, see Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400 – circa 1204* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 40ff.
- 32 Not every council, of course, addressed specifically Trinitarian issues. Each, however, focused on individual characteristics of the members of the Christian Trinity, most notably the nature of Christ or the Holy Spirit in relation to God the Father.
- 33 The term “περιχώρησις” or its verbal form, “περιχωρέω,” was first employed in a Christian context by Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistola*, 101, in the fourth century, but his use was limited to a discussion of the titles of Christ and the “intermingling” of his two natures. Nevertheless, Gregory implies a similar form of reciprocity inherent to later ideas of *perichoretic* interpenetration in Maximus the Confessor, Pseudo-Cyril, and John of Damascus. Indeed, Pseudo-Cyril seems to have been influenced by Gregory’s usage when he more fully describes the Trinitarian identity in *De sacrosancta trinitate* (cf. Egan, “Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*”). Gregory of Nyssa, a contemporary in the fourth century, employs similar terminology to articulate Trinitarian interpenetration and reciprocity – cf. Stramara. On the broader historical development of both the term *perichoresis* and evolving concept of interpenetrative movement, see note 11.
- 34 John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.14.
- 35 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*, 31.14. On the Trinitarian discourse of this oration, see Andreou Theodorou, “Η ΕΙΚΟΝΙΚΗ - ΣΥΜΒΟΛΙΚΗ ΑΝΑΛΟΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΦΩΤΟΣ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΥ ΝΑΖΙΑΝΖΗΝΟΥ.” *Theologia* 47 (1976), 253–262; Egan, “Primal Cause and Trinitarian *Perichoresis*” and “Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*”; Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 187–233; and Scalise, 62ff. Theodorou and Scalise argue that the language of the passage shows an incipient understanding of what would eventually become known as Trinitarian *perichoresis*. Egan, however, objects, and Beeley remains cautious in comparing Gregory’s understanding of *perichoresis* with that of Pseudo-Cyril and John of Damascus two centuries later, based on certain fundamental differences in viewing the agency of God the Father.
- 36 Burgundio of Pisa, *Expositio fidei orthodoxae*.

- 37 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 9. Note, however, that Augustine was staunchly opposed to representing the Trinity pictorially, and even mental images of the Trinity were both insufficient and problematic for understanding its nature – cf. *Epistola*, 120.2.7 and 12.
- 38 See note 12.
- 39 For primary sources emphasizing this form of mystical transformation during baptism, see Ambrose of Milan, *De mysteriis* and *De sacramentis*; Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus* (especially *Post traditum baptismum* and *De Exodo*); Gregory of Nyssa, *In diem luminum* and *De oratione Dominica*; Basil of Caesarea, *De baptismo*; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis*, *Catecheses mystagogiae*, *Catecheses illuminandorum*, *Catecheses ad illuminandos*, and *De mysteriis*; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos*; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Homiliae de baptismo*; Narsai, *Homiliae* (especially 17, 21, and 22); and John the Deacon, “*Epistola ad Senarium*.”
- 40 Ambrose, *De mysteriis*, 3.15: “Non ergo solis corporis tui credas oculis. Magis videtur, quod non videtur, quia istud temporale, illud aeternum. Magis aspicitur, quod oculis non conprehenditur, animo autem ac mente cernitur.” In *Sancti Ambrosii opera: Pars settima*. Otto Faller, ed. (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1955), 91–92. Ambrose later repeats the sentiment in 4.19 and 8.44, and it appears in the treatise *De sacramentis*, 1.3.10 and 3.2.12, which traditionally has been ascribed to Ambrose.
- 41 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis*, 15.
- 42 Gregory of Nyssa, *In diem luminum* (*vulgo in baptismum Christi oratio*): “οὐτε μὴν ἡ φλογὶν ῥομφαία κυκλώσει τὸν παράδεισον ἀπρόσιτον τοῖς ἐγγίξουσιν ποιούσα τὴν εἰσοδὸν, πάντα δὲ ἡμῖν τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἁμαρτίας μετεσκευάσθη πρὸς εὐφροσύνην. καὶ βατὸς μὲν ἀνθρώπῳ παράδεισος καὶ οὐρανὸς αὐτός, συνηρμόσθη δὲ εἰς φιλίαν ἡ κτίσις ἡ ἐγκόσμιός τε καὶ ὑπερκόσμιος πάλαι πρὸς ἐαυτὴν στασιάζουσα καὶ ἄνθρωποι τοῖς ἀγγέλοις ἐγενόμεθα σύμφωνοι τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνοις εὐσεβοῦντες θεολογίαν.” In *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 9.1. E. Gebhardt, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 241.
- 43 On baptism and spiritual perception, see Dennis, “Performing Paradise” and “Living Water, Living Presence.”
- 44 Nicoletta Isar, “The Dance of Adam: Reconstructing the Byzantine *xopós*.” *Byzantinoslavica* 61 (2003), 179–204; idem, “‘Xopós of light’: Vision of the Sacred in Paulus the Silentiary’s Poem *Descriptio S. Sophiae*.” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 28 (2004), 215–242; Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Isar, “XOPÓΣ: Dancing into the Sacred Space of Chora: An Inquiry into the Choir of Dance from the Chora.” *Byzantion* 75 (2005), 199–224; Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The Performative Icon.” *Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (2006), 631–655; idem, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); idem, “Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics.” *Gesta* 50, no. 2 (2011), 93–111; Isar, “Imperial XOPÓΣ: A Spatial Icon of Time as Eternity.” In *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*. Alexei Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Индрик, 2011), 143–166; Pentcheva, “Performing the Sacred in Byzantium: Image, Breath and Sound.” *Performance Research* 19, no. 3 (2014), 120–128; Dennis, “Performing Paradise” and idem, “Living Water, Living Presence.”
- 45 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. W. D. Halls, trans. (London: Routledge, 1990); and Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 46 See also chapters by Lidova, Carile, and Marsengill in this volume.
- 47 Lidov, “Spatial Icons. The Miraculous Performance with the Hodegetria of Constantinople.” In *Hierotopy: Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow: Прогресс-Традиция, 2006), 349–372; and idem, ed., *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow: Индрик, 2011).

7 A mobile dialogue of an immobile saint

St. Symeon the Younger, Divine Liturgy, and the architectural setting

Ayşe Belgin-Henry

The sixth-century site of St. Symeon the Younger at the Wondrous Mountain, located approximately 18 kilometers southwest of Antioch, is founded around the column of the saint that followed the ascetic model of his namesake, the fifth-century “protostylite,” St. Symeon the Elder (Figure 7.1).¹ Scholars have long recognized that St. Symeon the Younger’s cult is founded upon inherent references deriving from the tradition of St. Symeon the Elder, despite the careful silence of the textual sources concerning the apparent link between the two Symeons.² The site of St. Symeon the Younger at the Wondrous Mountain similarly refers to the site of St. Symeon the Elder at Qal’at Sem’an through various elements, among which the most apparent indication emerges as the octagonal space surrounding the columns of both saints. Although this interaction is clearly important, the architectural interpretation of the building site seems to have suffered from the perspective that perceived the site mostly in comparison to Qal’at Sem’an.³ While the recent fieldwork on the Wondrous Mountain revealed that the planning of the building complex remained relatively misunderstood despite two excavations and one major survey previously conducted on the site, the results also call for a new perspective on its architecture.⁴

Subsequently, the present discussion will focus on one essential but rather neglected feature of the site at the Wondrous Mountain that distinguishes it from the majority of the pilgrimage centers: the complex was not a commemorative center built after the death of a saint, but was an elaborate setting constructed around a living ascetic.⁵ In this framework, the active interaction of the immobile stylite with the liturgical celebrations seems to have played a more significant role in the architectural formulation than previously realized. A closer analysis of the site clearly indicates that the stylite was essentially positioned in a setting that offered facilities for pilgrimage, but was meant to be perceived as a church, providing a highly unconventional interpretation of sacred space.

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The seventh-century *Lives* of St. Symeon the Younger and Martha, the saint’s mother, are hagiographic texts that remain as the main sources for establishing a

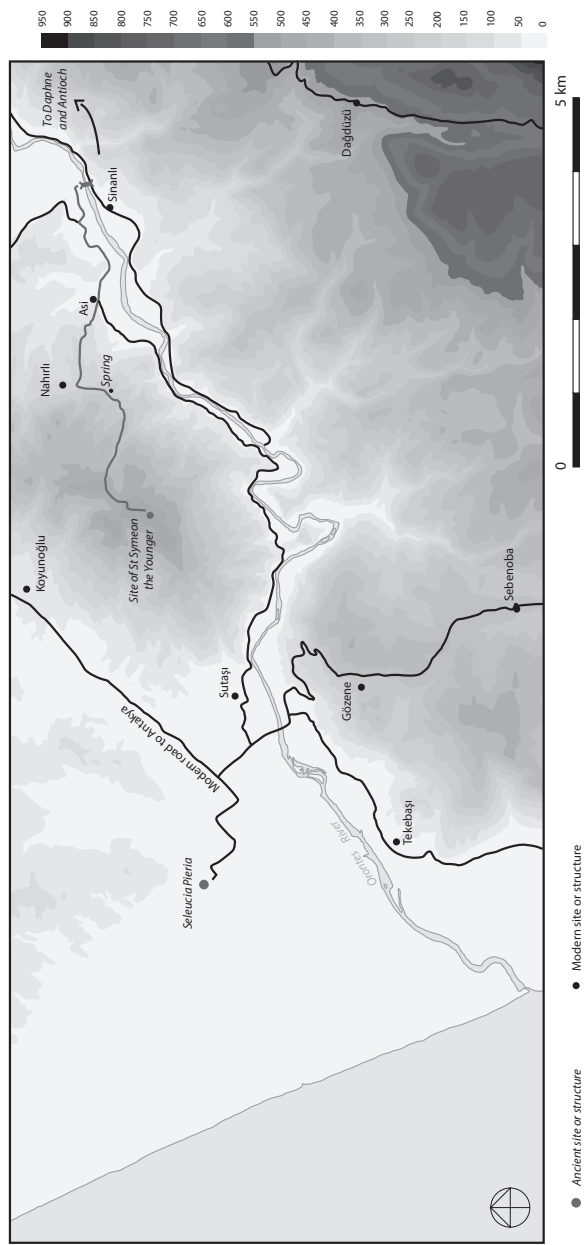


Figure 7.1 Map of the site of St. Symeon the Younger and its vicinity.
Drawing: Olivier Henry.

relative chronology for the saint and his site.⁶ According to these texts, St. Symeon the Younger was possibly born in 521 AD and started his ascetic career as a child – six or seven years old – at the monastery of John the Stylites. The monastery of John was located at the slopes of the Wondrous Mountain crowning the route from Antioch towards Seleucia Pieria. This was the monastery where the child stylite moved to his second column when he was twelve or thirteen (533–534). The change became an incident of celebration, during which he was ordained as a deacon.

St. Symeon moved to the peak of the hill sometime after the Persian Sack of Antioch at 540 AD. The construction activities started shortly after, and the building program not only included the column for the stylite but also a monumental complex around it. He is considered to have moved to his column approximately ten years after, perhaps in 551 AD. He was ordained as a priest when he was thirty-three years old (ca. 554 AD).

The complex witnessed another major building activity after Martha died. The *Life* of Martha clearly states that a church was built on the site in order to house her remains. Although her death cannot be dated securely, the text suggests that one or two decades passed after the initial consecration of the site. Based on Van den Ven's proposal, 562 AD remains the conventionally accepted date for the death of Martha. Symeon himself died in 592 AD, and this year is the only actual date given in the *Lives*.

The main spaces of the complex are arranged in an overall rectangular planning (i.e., the Rectangular Core) around an octagonal open area, at the center of which the column of St. Symeon the Younger is located (Figure 7.2). Three centrally located entrances lead into the Rectangular Core, from the west, north, and south, conducting the visitors towards the Octagon. The octagonal space opens eastwards into the Church of Holy Trinity, which is flanked by two other churches. The church built after Martha's death is at its south, while to its north is a small church of uncertain designation that possibly had a functional relationship with the baptistery. Despite being a freestanding structure, the baptistery is not located far away from the Rectangular Core. Various traces on both buildings suggest that a covered walkway once connected the baptistery to the North Church, thence to the Rectangular Core, although this walkway no longer exists.

The main entrance to the Rectangular Core was the western one. The atrium that preceded the rectangular center led visitors eastward into the octagon by way of the Entrance Hall, adjacent to a hospice at its north. Several cisterns and unidentified rooms are located to the south of the Entrance Hall. A passage at the southeastern corner of the Entrance Hall leads into the Tetraconch, at the southwest corner of the Octagon. The Tetraconch was linked to the South Passage by another short passage way.

The *Life* of the saint also indicates that the Church of Holy Trinity and the Octagon was consecrated during the ceremony (ca. 551 AD), when the saint ascended his column on the site. Hence, these structures are dated securely to the first construction program of the sixth century. In addition to these two main structures, there is mention of some secondary spaces such as the hospice, a grain



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|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. The Octagon | 7. The Baptistry | 13. The "West Gate" |
| 2. The Church of Holy Trinity | 8. The Hospice | 14. The South Chapel |
| 3. The North Church | 9. The Entrance Hall | 15. The North Chapel |
| 4. The South Church | 10. The Storage Area | 16. The Eastern Area |
| 5. The South Passage | 11. The Atrium | 17. The North Tower |
| 6. The North Passage | 12. The North Gate | |

Figure 7.2 The Rectangular Core at the site of St. Symeon the Younger.

Drawing: Ayşe Belgin-Henry and Pascal Lebouteiller.

storage room, the kitchen, the bakery, and the smithy in the *Life* of St. Symeon the Younger, which have been accepted by scholars as part of the same construction phase.⁷

On the other hand, the *Lives* do not mention the North Church or the baptistery. This silence in the texts persuaded the scholars to insist on a later date for the small basilica. The architectural details on the structure state otherwise and clarify that the North Church belonged to the same building phase as the Church of Holy Trinity. The clearest evidence is the masonry; the north wall of the Holy Trinity church, which is the south wall of the North Church, is bonded with the east wall of the North Church (Figure 7.3). Despite the lack of secure dating criteria, the close spatial and functional relationship of the baptistery with the North Church might also suggest that they were built together.

The extent and the context of the renovation on the site after Martha's death also seems to be more complicated than was reflected in the *Life* of Martha. There is no doubt that the South Church, the main structure, was added a few decades later and was destined to house the relics of the stylite's mother.⁸ Nonetheless, there is evidence that suggests the Tetraconch and the South Passage might have been finalized alongside the South Church at this period, and the south section of the Rectangular Core was transformed into an alternative route of veneration at this later date.⁹ Overall, the goal of the second sixth-century phase seems to differ from the initial concerns, focusing on the future of the site, foreshadowing the impending death of the stylite through the death of his mother.¹⁰ The later configuration of the building complex would eventually integrate various relics at different locations (the tombs of Martha and Symeon, the fragment of True Cross and the column of the stylite) and a dynamic pilgrimage experience for its visitors.



Figure 7.3 The southeast corner of the North Church.

Photo: Necati Alkan.

The saint and the “ecclesia” at the Wondrous Mountain

At first glance, the planning of the Rectangular Core might suggest that the saint and the liturgical activities did not have a direct interaction, since the saint had a fixed position on his column surrounded by an octagonal open area and the liturgical areas are limited within the adjunctive churches to the east. However, as Ann Marie Yasin convincingly argues, even when the cultic foci and the liturgical areas were physically separate at the early Christian centers, they were correlated through various formulations of visual interaction.¹¹ A careful examination of the complex at the Wondrous Mountain reveals that the interaction of the saint with the liturgy seems to have been similarly established through a series of different planning and decoration strategies. Nonetheless, the interaction of the styliadion and the liturgical area at the Wondrous Mountain seems to be stronger than other examples and perhaps was one of the major characteristics of the original configuration.

The two churches of the site that were the first to be constructed, the North Church and the Holy Trinity Church, were adjacent occupying the east of the Rectangular Core. The Church of Holy Trinity held the central location and was opened towards the octagonal space with a large arch (Figure 7.4). The choice of an open arch instead of a simple door (or doors) might easily be read as an architectonic element that signifies these two structures meant to communicate; but this element on its own does not provide enough evidence for discussion. Djobadze has also suggested that the elaborately sculpted pilaster capitals of this arch, different than the simple capitals of the remaining three entrance arches that open up into the Octagon, further emphasized the connection between the church and the octagonal area.¹²



Figure 7.4 View from the Octagon towards the Church of Holy Trinity.

Photo: Ayşe Belgin-Henry.

The ascetic practice of St. Symeon the Younger was immersed in a liturgical context, as Susan Ashbrook Harvey discusses in several studies.¹³ The passages in the *Lives* reflect the actual routine of Symeon the Younger, who was an established member of the clergy (a deacon since a young age) and was involved continuously in reading the scriptures, delivering sermons, and coordinating communal prayers and troparia.¹⁴ His audience was either monks or laymen, depending on the occasion.¹⁵ The *Life* gives specific emphasis to the resident monks, but this fact might have more to do with the authorship of the text and its focus on their convent and its daily life, rather than the actual realities at the site. Hence, the question arises whether Symeon was actively involved in the regular services. Although a clear answer for this question is not possible, it might be surprising for a saint, who was actively involved in the preaching and scripture reading, not to be involved as a member of clergy during the official liturgy of a church that was built specifically for him. The lack of an ambo (or a Syrian bema in an Antiochene context, although much less likely) within the Church of Holy Trinity seems to support this possibility.¹⁶ Despite the lack of evidence, whether the liturgical activities within the main church, or both churches, were extended into the Octagon remains an open question. Nonetheless, the spatial integration of the saint within the liturgy was definitely fulfilled with the confirmation of the saint as a priest at a later date; his column could have acted as altar from this time onwards, in addition to its proposed role as an ambo. The ordination would have literally turned the octagonal area surrounding him into an open-air church.

One intrinsic element of liturgy – incense – also served to connect the two spaces, with its Antiochene-Syriac emphasis on both liturgical and personal devotion.¹⁷ The extensive significance of incense for the cult of St. Symeon the Younger as an intermediary between the divine and the devotee has received recent scholarly interest in studies concentrating on texts and tokens.¹⁸ The element of interaction between the saint and the different kinds of visitors was certainly not limited to the incense, and the Octagon was certainly a scenic setting where visual, tactile, auditory exchanges were set into motion. On the other hand, the incense seems to have played a particular role in this context, for it both activated the internal sanctity of materials and had an epistemological role in the process; the incense enabled the knowledge and internalization of divine presence for the participants.¹⁹ What needs to be added is its spatial significance as an olfactory bridge between the Holy Trinity Church and the Octagon that marked their unity and contextualized private devotion within the liturgy.

The architectural decoration of the church of Holy Trinity seems to be another element that implemented the transition and connection between the Church of Holy Trinity and the Octagon, while providing a link between the ritual within the church and the cultic activity centered on the stylite saint at the center of the Octagon. The majority of the architectural decoration of the Church of Holy Trinity is a combination of the rural scenes and geometric figures, and both the architectural sculpture and the mosaics seem to convey a taste for themes based on the life in the countryside, combined with an awareness of contemporary Mediterranean themes. The large-scale parallels – with comparisons ranging from Adriatic to

Syria, which Djobadze found related to the style of the geometric decoration of the architrave in particular – usually remained unexplained and undercontextualized.²⁰ In my opinion, although the Mediterranean trade networks did supply Antioch with some of the basic materials needed while it was in the process of rebuilding (specifically at the time the construction of the Wondrous Mountain started), Antioch most likely not only received the materials, but also the latest trends of patterns, accompanied by artisans and masons.²¹

Several examples of architectural sculpture that belonged to the Church of Holy Trinity can be distinguished and seems to have had particular significance. The first of these is the southeastern pilaster capital, which clearly had a complicated composition, but cannot be fully discerned due to its rather badly preserved state (Figure 7.7). The major motif, two birds flanking a cross, is central on all three sides of the basket capital. Two buildings flank the central motif at the western face, but unfortunately, it is not possible to deduce more than this, since the rest of the composition is destroyed. The possibility remains that the scene on the north and the south faces of the capital was repeated here symmetrically.

The cross on the capital was most likely intended to be perceived simultaneously both as a cross and stylite, considering there had already been established according to the saint's hagiography this comparison between the stylite's column and the cross.²² If perceived in this manner, the pilaster capital might reflect a known formula used on some eulogia (although never in the stylite iconography) of two buildings flanking a saint. The nature and significance of these representations are not always clear.²³ Here, if such a composition was intended, the building represented may be the actual church with its three apse windows rather than a generic one, and the same can be suggested for the depictions on all three sides of the pilaster capital. The compositions on the north and south sides of the capital seem to be identical. In this composition, there is again the representation of the eastern exterior facade of a basilica, but the southern one also includes a

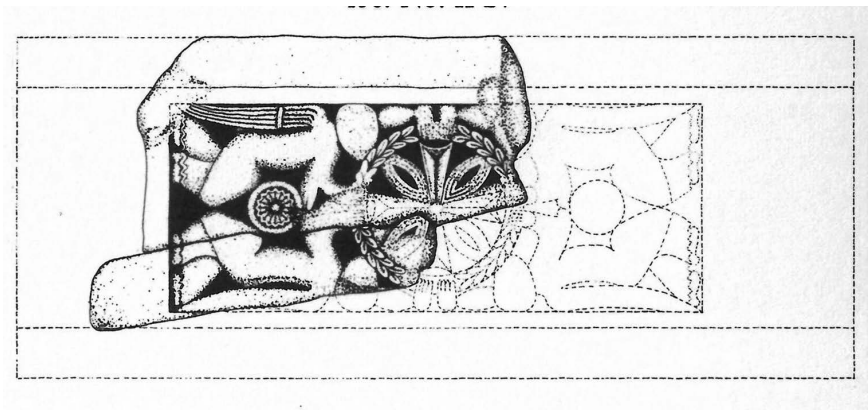


Figure 7.5 The restored drawing of the architrave with angels.

From: Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, Figure.XXIX, 138.

hand pointing downwards towards the church. There is a square structure with an inserted equal armed cross at the westernmost limit of the composition, with an elongated spiral above the square base.

The hand pointing at the church, which represents the Hand of God, parallels the narration in the *Life* of “showing the saint with the finger” (δακτυλοδεικτοῦν), and at least two similar iconographic motifs can be discussed in relation to this detail.²⁴ First, the composition might directly allude to the Transfiguration of Jesus, as the Hand of God holds the same position in some mosaics that depicts this subject.²⁵ The spiral might represent the column itself; yet none of the known stylite images to my knowledge depict a spiral column and the spiral object fluctuates rather than being a rigid and straight row. Hence, because of the reference with the hand, and since the spiral is not under the hand but higher, I suspect that this might be the reference to the tradition told in the *Life* about the origins of the site – that a cloud of light descended upon the mountain, which would again be a parallel reference to Transfiguration.²⁶

Nonetheless, the spiral, however badly depicted, might simply be a stairway superimposed on the column of the stylite. The perspective of the stairs is almost always represented on the *eulogiai* with diagonal steps. It is also important to note that whatever was depicted at the corner, it was separated at the upper sections from the top decorative border of the capital that clearly continued at the back. The possibility that the stylite on his column might have been represented on this section cannot be dismissed easily.

Considering either of these alternatives, the Hand of God indicates the announcement, transformation, and theophany within the context of the actual monastery. In addition, the congregation gathered inside was transformed into an audience that viewed in this imagery the actual building as if from the exterior, as witnesses to the time when the announcement for the site was made. Additionally, since the imagery flanked the bema of the Holy Trinity Church, the liturgical rite was put in relation to both the actual exterior of the church and the traditional narration of its origins. Subsequently, during each and every communion, when the Holy Spirit descended in the sanctuary for the consecration of the bread and wine, the recent past when the Holy Spirit saturated the saint and marked the site was also reenacted.²⁷ The transformation of the saint and his site was given a parallel, Eucharistic context, that in turn ensured the transformation of the visitors. This would have acted as a reminder for the congregation that the site was linked to the divine power they were witnessing during the Eucharistic rite.

There exists another noteworthy detail that seems different from the remaining rural scenes of the architectural sculpture of the capitals. A monk *in orans* found on one of the fallen column capitals of the church quite possibly represented Symeon himself (Figure 7.6).²⁸ Yet, this representation is surprisingly not centrally positioned, but located towards the corner. This choice might not be arbitrary, however, if this figure was meant to interact with one of the architraves of the church.²⁹ This particular architrave was clearly meant to signify something, as it is quite different from the others; it has the only figural composition among the geometrically decorated nave architraves, with four angels carrying a cross, inscribed within a wreath (Figure 7.5).³⁰



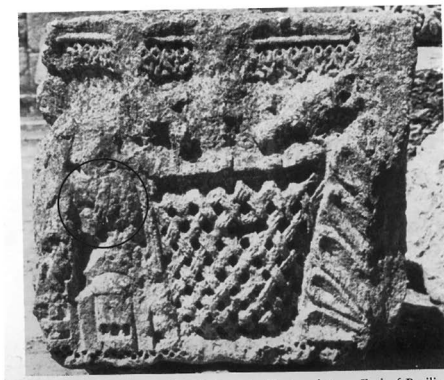
Figure 7.6 The capital with monk in orans, the Church of Holy Trinity.
Photo: Ayşe Belgin-Henry.



a. North face.



b. West face.



c. South face

Figure 7.7 The southeastern pilaster capital with the Hand of God highlighted by the author, the Church of Holy Trinity.

From: Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, Plate 43.

The architrave may be a direct reference to a passage in the *Life* (or to the tradition that later found itself into the pages of the text), in which Symeon is given the gift of “sanctity,” when archangels bore a “diadem that carried a cross, above which a star shined like lightning.”³¹ The iconography of the *eulogiai* that is specifically attributed to St. Symeon the Younger distinguishes itself by the small detail of two angels carrying a “*clipeus* decorated with a cross,” a detail never observed in St. Symeon the Elder tokens, and it is tempting to link this detail to the depiction on the architrave (Figure 7.8).³² If combined with the capital depicting Symeon, this architrave would create a three-dimensional allusion to the *eulogiai* of the saint, in which the stylite was frequently shown under crowning angels.³³

However, the notion that the Rectangular Core was designed as a coherent whole is perhaps best visible from the exterior rather than the interior. The exterior articulation of the core presents indications of how the site was contextually conceived and what the Rectangular Core was meant to signify. The Rectangular Core does not have much of its original exterior walls intact, but the remaining sections, especially the northern façade, hardly reflect the functional separation within the walls. The relatively unarticulated exterior façade of the Rectangular Core might have contributed to the visual impact, as it seems to suggest an ordinary, albeit a huge basilica with a freestanding baptistery to its north.

The western atrium precedes the core much like an atrium of a church. The atrium is opened into the Entrance Hall with a central door and once this door was opened, the view would resemble a three-aisled “church,” extending towards the



Figure 7.8 Eulogia of St. Symeon the Younger.

From: Bobbio, Mennella, *Inscriptiones*, 138, no. 132 A.

east but pierced by the Octagonal space.³⁴ Perhaps most telling is how the protruding apse of the Holy Trinity Church, together with the slightly recessed apse of the North Church, mimics the eastern façade of a basilica. In fact, rather than any basilica, it would have directly resembled in its original state the eastern façade of the East Basilica at Qal'at Sem'an with its three protruding semi-circular apses, which is extremely rare in Northern Syria.³⁵ Although probably the southern section was not completed at this period, enough seems to have been established to give the exterior impression of a "church" for visitors who approached the site from the main entrances, especially from the north.

An intended emphasis on the exterior perception of the Rectangular Core as the "church" would also explain why the North Church was constructed with odd proportions, which resulted in a squarish interior that could have easily been balanced by extending the church towards east.³⁶ The medieval rebuilders who reinterpreted the interior of the North Church by adding four piers were right about understanding these proportions in terms of a cross-domed plan rather than a basilica, although it is unlikely that the original designers ever thought about the church as such.³⁷ These proportions were not corrected, since the overall impact was likely much more important than the interior space³⁸ and the apse of the North Church should have therefore remained recessed.

Therefore, I suggest that the Rectangular Core was perceived as the "ecclesia" of Symeon the Younger with its colorful and busy interior wrapped into the architectural frame. The interior was compartmentalized in order to establish services associated with pilgrimage, such as an interaction with the saint/relic or receiving beneficiary work, but these spaces were reconsidered at the Wondrous Mountain, offering a unique architectural syntax. St. Symeon the Younger stood on his column at the Wondrous Mountain, not surrounded by a commemorative site, but piercing a church, while the builders of the site seem to have successfully underscored the holistic integrity of the saint's practice and the liturgy.

Notes

- 1 The site was excavated in the 1930s under the direction of Mécérian (G. Millet, "Communication: La Mission Archéologique du P. Mécérian dans l'Antiochène." *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions* (1933), 343–348; G. Millet, "Séance du 17 Mai: Un rapport du R.P. Mécérian sur les fouilles au monastère de Saint-Syméon-le Jeune au Mont Admirable (Syrie)." *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions* (1935), 195–197; G. Millet, "Rapport du P. Mécérian sur les fouilles au monastère de Saint-Syméon le Jeune au Mont Admirable." *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions* (1936), 205–206. Jean S. J. Mécérian, "Communications: Une Mission Archéologique dans l'Antiochène." *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions* (1934), 144–149. Jean S. J. Mécérian, "Communications: Monastère de Saint-Syméon-le-Jeune: Exposé des Fouilles." *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions* (1948), 323–328. Jean S. J. Mécérian, "Le Monastère de Saint Syméon le Stylite du Mont Admirable." In *Actes du VIe Congrès International d'Études Byzantines*, Vol. II (Paris: École des Hautes Études, 1951), 299–302. Jean S. J. Mécérian, "Les Inscriptions du Mont Admirable." In *Mélanges Offerts au Père René Mouterde*, Vol. II. Maurice Dunand, ed. (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1962), 297–330. Jean S. J.

- Mécérian, *Expédition Archéologique dans l'Antiochène Occidentale* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965). Djobadze resumed the excavations in 1960s. The final results were published in Wachtang Z. Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations in the Region West of Antioch on-the-Orontes* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986). The survey on this site and its surroundings conducted by Lafontaine-Dosogne was also accompanied by a detailed investigation of the tokens, and the final publication included her work both on the field and the museum (Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires Archéologiques dans la Région d'Antioche* (Brussels: Éditions de Byzantion, 1967). See also the recently published article by Gwiazda based on the photographic archive of Mécérian excavations, Mariusz Gwiazda, "Le Sanctuaire de Saint-Syméon-Stylite-le-Jeune au Mont Admirable à la lumière de la documentation photographique du père Jean Mécérian." *MUSJ* 65 (2013–2014), 317–340. I recently completed my dissertation focusing on the architectural characteristics of the complex that included detailed documentation. Ayşe Henry, "The Pilgrimage Center of St. Symeon the Younger: Designed by Angels, Supervised by a Saint, Constructed by Pilgrims." PhD Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015.
- 2 See, for example, Sodini, who also rightly notes the silence of the sources; Jean-Pierre Sodini, "Saint-Syméon: l'influence de Saint-Syméon dans le culte et l'économie de l'Antiochène." In *Les sanctuaires et leur rayonnement dans le monde méditerranéen de l'Antiquité à l'époque moderne*. Juliette de la Genière et al., eds. (Paris: Diffusion de Bocard, 2010), 319–321.
 - 3 Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires Archéologiques*, 86; Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 226, n: 228/1; Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 82.
 - 4 I had the opportunity to examine and document the building complex on the Wondrous Mountain through three seasons of fieldwork from 2007 to 2009 under the auspices of a research permit held by Hatice Pamir from the Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi (Hatay) and as a part of the regional survey under her direction. The architectural analyses formed the basis of the discussions presented in this chapter. The publication of the documentation and my dissertation is in progress. See note 1 for previous studies on the complex.
 - 5 A comparative example would have been the complex constructed around the column of Daniel the Stylite. The site was founded nearby Anaplous (modern İstinye), Constantinople (Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les Saints Stylites* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1923), LVIII and Jules Pargoire, "Anaple et Sosthène." *Izvestiya russkago arkheologicheskago Instituta v Konstantinopolye* 3 (1898), 60–97). However, the remains of the center have never been identified and are likely to remain this way in the near future due to the urban expansion of İstanbul. The *Life* of Daniel Stylites remains as the only source that gives information about the complex (Translation by Elizabeth A. S. Dawes; Elizabeth A. S. Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon, and St. John the Almsgiver* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977), 1–84). See also the chapter by Marsengill in this volume.
 - 6 The *Life* of Symeon is edited and translated by Paul Van den Ven: Paul Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune*, Vol. I (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962) and Vol. II (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970). The *Life* of Martha is edited by the same author in the second volume of the same publication. For the chronology deduced from the *Lives* and its problems, see Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. I, 108–130.
 - 7 The *Life* of St. Symeon the Younger, especially chapters 100 and 133 (Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 97–99 and 114–117). See also Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 58.
 - 8 The *Life* of Martha, chs. 47–51 (Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 288–296).
 - 9 A detailed discussion is neither necessary nor possible within the limits of this chapter, but it is quite likely that the Tetraconch was built in order to house the relic of the True

- Cross that was brought from Jerusalem after Martha's death, around the time that the South Church was built. See *Life of Martha* chs. 67–70 (Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 308–312). The use of similar architectonic elements and especially the use of conches and their decoration with marble revetments on the walls, which is not used elsewhere on the site, indicate an affiliation of design principles between the South Church and the Tetraconch that parallels the contextual link.
- 10 The remark in the *Life of Martha* (ch. 46, Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 288) that Symeon wanted to be laid to rest with his mother is an indication that the South Church was constructed also for him.
 - 11 Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Church, and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and Ann Marie Yasin, "Sight Lines of Sanctity at Late Antique Martyria." In *Architecture of the Sacred: Space, Ritual, and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium*. Bonna D. Wescoat and Robert Ousterhout, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 248–280.
 - 12 Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 75.
 - 13 Especially Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "The Stylite's Liturgy: Ritual and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 3 (1998), 523–539.
 - 14 Ashbrook Harvey indicates the liturgical context of his prayers (Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 195). See *Life of Saint Symeon*, chapter 32 for a general comment on the constant scripture reading and addresses; Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 40–41. A parallel textual group to the *Life* is the compilation of thirty sermons of Symeon the Younger. Twenty-seven of these sermons were already edited in 1871 (Angelo Mai, "Sanctorum Symeonum: Sermones." *Novae Patrum Bibliothecae* VIII, 3 (1871), 4–156) and the first three sermons have been edited by Van den Ven, who discusses the totality of the compilation in the same study (Paul van den Ven, "Les Ecrits de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune avec trois Sermons Inédits." *Le Muséon* 70 (1957), 1–57). St. Symeon the Younger even composes troparia (The *Life of Symeon*, chs. 105 and 106; Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 106–108).
 - 15 A striking point concerning the subject is the fact that in the *Life* all the sermons and preaching done by Symeon the Younger is addressed to the resident disciples of the saint, while one third of the sermons left from the saint were actually addressed to the laymen (David Hester, "The Eschatology of the Sermons of Symeon the Younger the Stylite." *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990), 332–333).
 - 16 There is a cruciform inscription that reads "archimandrite" at the center of the nave of the Church of Holy Trinity. The inscription probably belongs to a later restoration (Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 205, No V/15). Djobadze suspects that it might have copied an earlier inscription and fulfilled the function of an ambo (Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 75). In the region, among the known examples, the synthronon is never coupled with a Syrian bema (Jean-Pierre Sodini, "Archéologie des églises et organisation spatiale de la liturgie." In *Les liturgies syriennes*. François Cassingena-Trévedy and Izabela Jurasz, eds. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 2006), 238–239), hence its existence is not expected in the churches at the Wondrous Mountain, where each church had a synthronon.
 - 17 The role of incense in the Syriac context has been extensively studied by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*; see especially chapter 4, "Redeeming Scents: Ascetic Models," 156–200, and for the specific mention of the *Life of St. Symeon the Younger* in this context, 194–196.
 - 18 In addition to the already mentioned studies by Ashbrook Harvey, see also Gary Vikan, "Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984), 70–71.
 - 19 Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, esp. 77–90.

- 20 Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, for the architrave capitals, see 99–106. Djobadze presents numerous comparative examples, but not an underlying context explaining the variety.
- 21 After the 526 and 528 earthquakes and the 540 Persian sack, the city had to be reconstructed, which was an imperial project in all cases. Hence the exchange of the models and style should be understood within the historical backdrop of the sixth-century Mediterranean imperial trade networks as they facilitated a wide-range distribution of building materials and concepts, and which would have been active within an important city such as Antioch. See Jean-Pierre Sodini, “Marble and Stoneworking in Byzantium, Seventh–Fifteenth Centuries.” In *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century*. Angeliki E. Laiou, ed. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 129–135) for a brief but noteworthy synthesis focusing specifically on the marble and stone production and trade. The main subject of the chapter considers the periods after the sixth century, but the study defines a vivid synthesis of the known evidence for before and during the sixth century as well. The best example from the Wondrous Mountain that indicates the connection with the material arriving for Antioch is the composition of the pilaster capital of the Holy Trinity Church that is a very close parallel to a capital found in Antioch and published by Lassus (Jean Lassus, *Sanctuaires Chrétiens de Syrie* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1947), Plate LII, figs. 3 and 5; the section with the basket capital). Yet, this specific capital at the Wondrous Mountain is a flattened version of the capital from Antioch, which indicates the involvement of local builders and artisans and local interpretation of the models seen elsewhere.
- 22 The stylite is compared to the cross in several passages of the *Lives* (compiled and discussed in Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. I, 147* and Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 258, n. 6.1). The iconography is discussed in Lassus, *Sanctuaires*, 288. A very similar representation that depicts the saint – right under a cross – flanked by two birds on a relief is now in Munich. The sarcophagus is “probably Syrian” and is dated to the seventh century. See Mamoun Fansa and Beate Bollmann, *Die Kunst der frühen Christen in Syrien: Zeichen, Bilder und Symbole vom 4. bis 7. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: Philipp Von Zabern Verlag, 2008), 177 (Catalogue No. 130).
- 23 Among the early examples cited by Pitarakis, the St. Philip *eulogia* – a bronze bread stamp – is a noteworthy parallel, since it is possible that the actual octagonal martyrium of the saint in Hierapolis was depicted to the right of the saint (Brigitte Pitarakis, “New Evidence on Lead Flasks and Devotional Patterns: from Crusader Jerusalem to Byzantium.” In *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*. Denis Sullivan, Elizabeth Fisher, and Stratis Papaioannou, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 248–249). The 2010 discovery of the basilica at Hierapolis, associated with the saint’s tomb clarifies the interpretation as the saint is probably flanked by the two important structures on the site (Francesco D’Andria, “Phrygia Hierapolis’i [Pamukkale] 2011 Yılı Kazı ve Onarım Çalışmaları.” *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* 34, no. 3 (2013), 131).
- 24 The *Life* of St. Symeon, chapter 95 (Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. I, 74).
- 25 A parallel is the Transfiguration at the apse mosaic in San Apollinare in Classe. This is an adequate example in this context since the iconography is not regular and has already been discussed in terms of its liturgical context, which is similar to my discussion for the pilaster capitals in the following section (Angelika Michael, *Das Apsismosaik von S. Apollinare in Classe: seine Deutung im Kontext der Liturgie* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005)). Although Michael’s discussion provides a very strong parallel to mine, I still have to accept that the argument of Mauskopf Deliyannis (Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 269–270 with further bibliography) who thinks that the Michael’s interpretation should be considered as one possible perception among many other possibilities suggested by other scholars, rather than the intended context. The case at

the Wondrous Mountain, where an intentional link to liturgy can be denoted, is rather different, as discussed herein.

- 26 Although translated as “cloud of fire” by Van den Ven (Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 91), which would directly signify the descent of Holy Spirit in Syriac tradition (Sebastian P. Brock, “Fire from Heaven: From Abel’s sacrifice to the Eucharist.” *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993), 229–243), it actually is “cloud of light/ νεφέλην φωτός” in the Greek text (Van den Ven, *La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. I, 74). An alternative reading – albeit less likely because of the different iconographic contexts – is proposed by a detail on a manuscript of Rabbula Gospels from the sixth century. The manuscript is mentioned in Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 130–131, and thoroughly analyzed in discussion in Massimo Bernabò, ed., *Il Tetravangelo di Rabbula: Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Plut. 1.56. L’illustrazione del Nuovo Testamento nella Siria del VI secolo* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008), and idem., “The Miniatures in the Rabbula Gospels: Postscripta to a Recent Book.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68 (2014), 342–358. In the iconography of the Baptism of Christ in this manuscript, the Hand of God above the dove together with the depiction of “fire on water,” a common theme in Syriac textual sources in relation to Christ’s Baptism, rises almost like a column (Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 111–112).
- 27 The saint was visited/overshadowed (The *Life* of St. Symeon the Younger, chs. 69, 103 and 118) by the Holy Spirit.
- 28 Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 108. The original location of the capital is not known.
- 29 All the architrave blocks were fallen when the excavations on the site started and their original location remain unknown.
- 30 Interpreted as the “exaltation of the cross” by Djobadze, who stated that the scene “attain[ed] cosmic significance” without any contextual explanation (Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 103). The interpretation was initially suggested by Lafontaine-Dosogne (*Itinéraires Archéologiques*, 118, n. 3).
- 31 Van den Ven (*La Vie Ancienne*, Vol. II, 54 n.4) connects this passage to the iconography of *eulogiai*, but his discussion does not include the architrave.
- 32 The differences between the iconographies of St. Symeon the Younger and St. Symeon the Elder, including this aspect, are discussed in detail in Jean-Pierre Sodini, “Eulogies de la fouille d’Antioche.” *Antakya 4642 nolu Parsel Kurtarma Kazısı, Vol. I*. Hatice Pamir, ed. (Hatay: Hatay Müzesi Yayınları, in press). The quote is originally in French and translated by the author from the same article.
- 33 Lafontaine-Dosogne discusses the similarity of the iconography of the architrave to the *eulogiai* but does not refer to the depiction of the monk *in orans* on the capital (Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires Archéologiques*, 118–119).
- 34 Verzone mentions a similar perceptive relation between the Entrance Hall and the Holy Trinity Church (Paolo Verzone, “Il santuario di S. Simeone il Giovane sul Monte delle Meraviglie.” *Corsi di cultura sull’arte ravennate e bizantina* 21 (1974), 279).
- 35 Qal’at Sem’an’s semi-circular apses remained unique in the region until the recent discovery of the East Basilica at Kefert ‘Aqab (Widad Khoury and Bertrand Riba, “Les églises de Syrie (IVe-VIIe siècle): essai de synthèse.” *Les églises en monde syriaque*. Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, ed. (Paris: Geuthner, 2013), 53).
- 36 In fact, excluding the apse, the east-west axis (ca. 16.5 meters) of the interior is shorter than the north-south axis (ca. 18.5 meters).
- 37 The North Church was extensively rebuilt probably during the revival of the complex by the tenth to eleventh centuries. The present four piers that are constructed by spolia are probably from the same late construction phase. Although it the Medieval builders might have referred to a planning notion that was quite widespread in their period, i.e., cross-domed, this does not mean that a dome was ever built for this church,

even during later periods. Indeed, the later piers do not look strong enough to carry a dome. See Robert Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008), 89–91, for a brief discussion of the basilicas that were transformed into cross-domed churches, and also for a condensed comparison of the rebuilt piers that carried a dome and the piers reconstructed at the North Church.

- 38 On size and scale of architectural installations for sacred space within the larger church complex, see also the chapter by Bogdanović in this volume.

8 Framing glorious spaces in the monastery of Hosios Loukas

Jelena Bogdanović

The use of architecture as a visual and conceptual frame is well attested in medieval art. For example, in medieval illuminations, architectural frames – comprised of basic architectural elements such as columns or arches – are often used to separate images from the accompanying texts.¹ Such architectural frames further signify the potent transparent boundaries between the space of the beholder and the space of that which is seen and thus define perceptible liminal spaces (Figure 8.1).² Actual architectural frames and their role in defining sacred space have been studied less, despite the fact that they frame space both literally and discursively, and at the same time, when used within the ritual performances in the church space, they actively engage with the body of the faithful and the body of the sacred.³ Delineated by architectural frames, the body of the sacred constituted a kind of “being-place” where the body of sacred figures and their related holy spaces remained closely interconnected.⁴ These architectural frames and settings within the church proper provided performative frameworks for liturgical services and paraliturgical devotional practices while, at the same time, they evoked biblical architecture and sacred space such as the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Aiming to develop discussions and methodologies about the role of architectural framing devices in the Byzantine religious context, this chapter highlights the use of canopied frames in the church of Hosios Loukas.⁵ The analysis of canopied architectural frames from Hosios Loukas is enriched within the discourse on spatial and conceptual framing that stems from Byzantine theological texts, and juxtaposed with modern philosophical and theoretical ideas on framing that engaged with what some may recognize as the “Baroque mode,” characterized by exuberant expressivity, empathy, multiplicity, movement, fluidity, and performativity. The Byzantine, Baroque, and modern concepts for framing are used not as merely devices for historical periodization in this chapter. The focus is rather on their capacities to shape knowledge about sacred space and body. The ontological capacity of framing sacred space integrated with the sacred body within it, provides a paradigm and intellectual construct that implies a dialogue between the beholders and the sacred, and provides an apparatus for better understanding of the multidimensionality of sacred space and body in the Byzantine realm beyond the representational, which is a predominant characteristic of positivistic scholarship.⁶

In order to situate the relevance of the Byzantine concept of framing the sacred within larger discussions about frames and framing, the canopies at Hosios



Fol. F.III Alinari N. 53025 Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana - Pagina dell'Evangelario Siriano: Madonna e Figlio (sec. VII) (Edit: 1987)

Figure 8.1 Icon of the Virgin and Christ Child under canopy. Illumination from the *Rabula Gospels* fol. 1b, Syria, 586 (Biblioteca Laurenziana).

Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

Loukas are here juxtaposed with Byzantine religious and theological ideas and compared with prevailing philosophical thoughts used in architectural theories. The ideas about frame and framing that stem from within Byzantine culture essentially come from Biblical sources that refer to *frame* as an architectural frame (cf. Ex 26, 36; Nm 3, 4), an embellishment (1Kg 7:31), as well as divine providence and “goodly frame” (Job 41:12).⁷ The divine aspect of framing is reflected in various Byzantine scholastic texts, such as John Damascene’s *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (seventh–eighth century) and Athanasius Alexandrine’s *Letters* (fourth century)⁸ that maintain that the ultimate Framer is God, who framed the Universe and all creation. By extension, the concept of God the Framer relates to architecture as well, since it is by divine providence all entities preserve their true natures as divine or earthly. Especially revealing are thoughts on framing by John of Damascus, who wrote on divine providence by connecting micro-cosmic and macro-cosmic levels: “He willed that all things should be and they were. He wills the universe to be framed and it is framed, and all that He wills comes to

pass”;⁹ and later, when writing on energies (agencies) of Jesus Christ, that: “it is in accordance with the plan implanted in it in a creative manner by the Cause that frames the universe. Wherefore, also, when they [holy fathers] spoke of it along the divine nature they called it energy.”¹⁰

The philosophical discussions on frame and framing in current architectural discourse essentially emerge from Kantian rationalist and positivist thought about *frame* from his critical Enlightenment text about aesthetics and art, *Critique of Judgment* (1790), where he introduced the term *parergon* as an ornamental frame that stands for the pure embellishment of an art work and may be used in a religious sense only if directing believers to a moral core.¹¹ Also invaluable to the discussion is Derrida’s postmodern response to Kant’s *parergon* in his *The Truth in Painting* (1978), where Derrida discusses *frame* as an integral part of the content that in fact negates the separation of the two different realms – within and outside of the frame – and where he examines *frame* as a semiotic, phenomenological, and ontological construct.¹² Lastly, pertinent material comes from more recent architectural studies that refer to Deleuze’s texts – *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* (1963), *The Fold* (1992), *Difference and Repetition* (1994) – that address both the Kantian and Derrida’s *frame* as an architectonic entity as well as a multifocal, lived experience in architecture.¹³ Ultimately, we will ask to what extent each of these notions is applicable to Byzantine frames.

*

As a well-studied site and one of the most complete and best preserved examples of Byzantine architecture, in general, the monastery of Hosios Loukas in Boeotia, Greece provides an elucidating case study for the investigation of spatial and conceptual frames of sacred space and sacred body in Byzantium. The monastery of Hosios Loukas, which is dedicated to the eponymous local saint and healer (d. 953), was, and still is a major pilgrimage site in the Balkans.¹⁴ Monastic architecture here frames the body and space of the sacred on multiple levels and reveals a highly sophisticated spatial design, which within the Byzantine context reinforced the perception of the holiness and its corporeality expressed through the interconnection of sacred space with the sacred body.

In the center of the monastic courtyard of Hosios Loukas, two large churches mark the sacred and pilgrimage space and are closely intertwined with evocative notions of the sacred bodies of two saints, Hosios Loukas and St. Barbara, who lived at different times (Figure 8.2). To the north is the tenth-century church of the Mother of God, accompanied and superseded by the larger early eleventh-century katholikon (main monastery church) of Hosios Loukas, to the south (Figure 8.3). This two-story katholikon also contains a crypt, which in religious architecture is usually reserved for saintly tombs. Today, in the northern arm of the crypt, a non-Byzantine, possibly post-medieval, cenotaph symbolically marks the tomb of Hosios Loukas. Almost axially above it, spatially connected but without any direct visual connection, at the junction of the two churches and set within the walls of the narrow opening of the eastern wall of the northern arm of the katholikon, is a healing tomb-shrine of Hosios Loukas that is venerated by pilgrims



Figure 8.2 Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. South church – katholikon dedicated to Hosios Loukas with the crypt, first half of the eleventh century; North church dedicated to the Mother of God, second half of the tenth century.

Photo: Jelena Bogdanović.

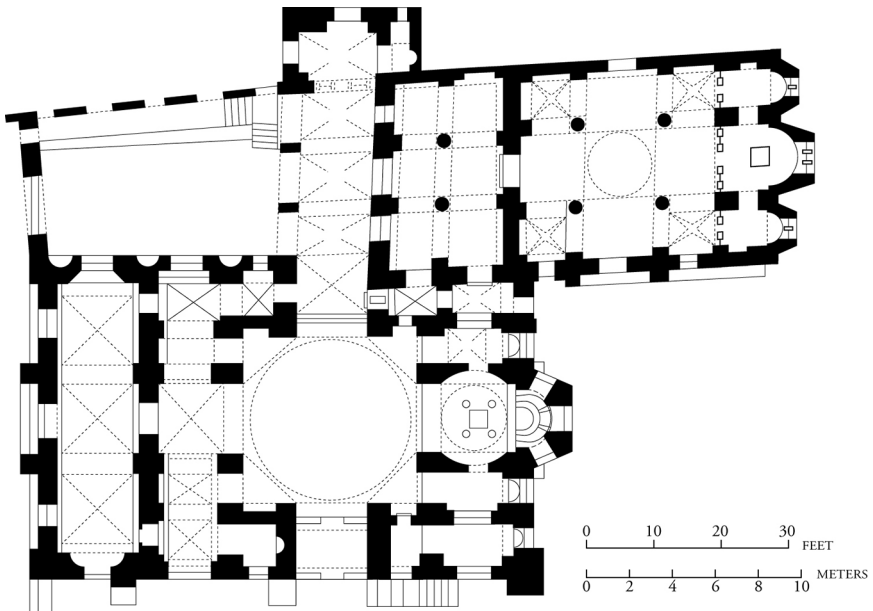


Figure 8.3 Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. Drawing of the floor plan: South church (bottom) – katholikon dedicated to Hosios Loukas with the crypt, first half of the eleventh century; North church (top) dedicated to the Mother of God, second half of the tenth century.

From: Kleiner/Mamiya, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 12E. ©2005 South-Western, a part of Cengage, Inc. Reproduced by permission. www.cengage.com/permissions.

(Figures 8.4 and 8.5). According to Eustachios Stikas, the church of the Mother of God is in the location of an earlier church originally dedicated to St. Barbara, an early Christian martyr whom Hosios Loukas himself venerated, while the crypt – also dedicated to St. Barbara – refers to the eponymous oratory mentioned in the *Life* of Hosios Loukas.¹⁵ Though St. Barbara is not and has never been present in the monastery through her bodily remains, the evocations of the memory of St. Barbara through prayers and her more palpable connections through Hosios Loukas reached through time and beyond the confines of the monastery of Hosios Loukas. For devoted pilgrims the narrative surrounding Hosios Loukas' veneration of the female saint and his own bodily remains in the shrine reinforced the overarching power of saintly relics.

The mechanisms of such complex spatial-time constructs and networks of sacredness and their corporeality in the Byzantine tradition can be analyzed in greater detail through the form, placement, and meaning of canopied installations within the katholikon of Hosios Loukas itself. In the katholikon of Hosios Loukas, four canopies architecturally frame specific hubs within the conceptual and physical networks of sacredness: the altar ciborium, now lost, whose fittings still mark the most sacred place within the church and whose marble fragments remain preserved in the monastery museum (the former refectory), allowing us to reconstruct the original canopy frame over the altar as a three-dimensional installation (Figure 8.6); the tomb-shrine canopy of Hosios Loukas embedded within the church walls, a major pilgrimage site even into the present (Figure 8.7); the canopy that signifies the Temple in the scene of the *Presentation of Christ in the*

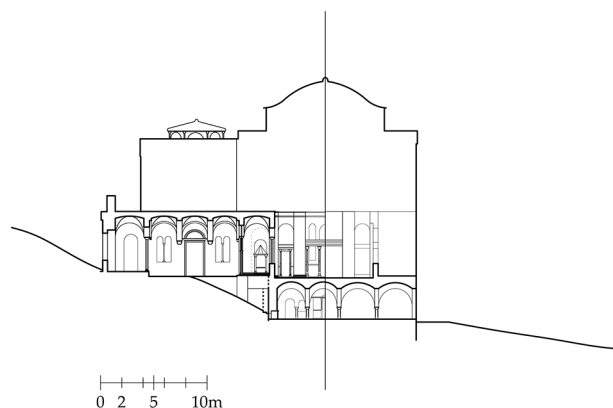


Figure 8.4 Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. Cross section: South church (right) – katholikon dedicated to Hosios Loukas with the crypt, first half of the eleventh century; North church (left) dedicated to the Mother of God, second half of the tenth century. Details show the merging of the two churches with the shrine of Hosios Loukas as the central locus of the north arm of the katholikon overlapping with the fifth bay of the expanded exonarthex of the church of the Mother of God.

Drawing: Cynthia McCall Torres.

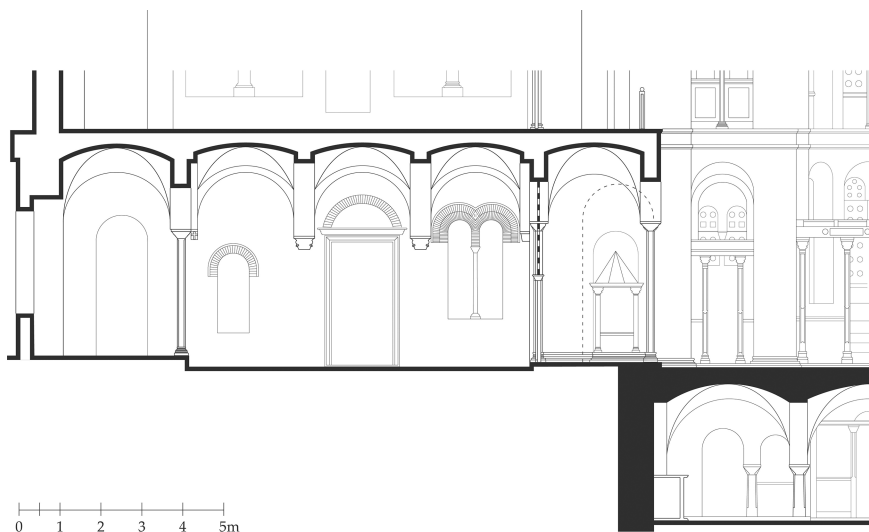
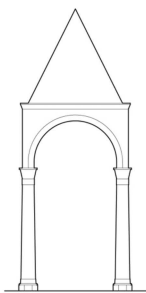
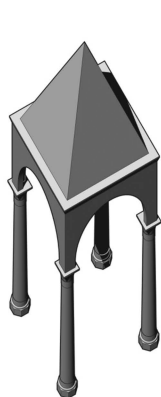


Figure 8.5 Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. Detail of the cross section showing spatial relationship between the canopied shrine of Hosios Loukas in the northern arm of the katholikon and the cenotaph that marks the tomb of Hosios Loukas in the crypt.

Drawing: Cynthia McCall Torres after Eustathios Stikas, *Tò Oikodomikòn Χρονικὸν τῆς Μονῆς Ὁσίου Λουκά Φωκίδος* (Athens: Athēnais Archaïologikēs Hetaireias, 1970), Figure 26.



0 100 200 300

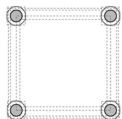


Figure 8.6 Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. The hypothetical reconstruction of the altar canopy installation in the sanctuary of the katholikon and architectural fragment of the altar canopy currently in the monastery refectory.

Drawing: Zhengyang Hua; photo: Jelena Bogdanović.



Figure 8.7 Tomb shrine of Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. Reconstruction drawings of the east and west elevations with a photograph of the tomb shrine of Hosios Loukas as of today.

Drawing: Cynthia McCall Torres after Eustathios Stikas, *Tò Oikodomicòn Xronikòn tḗs Monḗs 'Osíou Loukḗ Phokídos* (Athens: Athēnais Archaiologikḗs Hetaireias, 1970), Figure 15, Plate A; and Slobodan Ćurčić, “Proskynetaria icons, saints’ tombs, and the development of the iconostasis” in *The Iconostasis. Origins-Evolution-Symbolism*, A. Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Progress-Tradicija, 2000): 134–142, Figure 13. Photo: Jelena Bogdanović.

Temple (Figure 8.8) that is represented in golden mosaic in one of the squinches of the massive domed core of the major monastery church, the *katholikon* – also a massive canopy in its own right, going beyond the size and measurements of a singular human body to literally include the congregation in the church and to point to sacred space at macro-cosmic level (Figure 8.9). These canopies of different origins, sizes, materials, and locations within the monastery’s *katholikon*, framed and combined different and independent – though not necessarily mutually exclusive – “glorious spaces,” as they were recurrently described in Byzantine primary sources to denote the places of divine manifestations. The Byzantine narratives about “glorious spaces” essentially developed from the Old Testament, namely, “the glory of the Lord” that filled the holy tabernacle upon its construction (Ex 40:34). “Glorious spaces,” then, were associated with divine manifestations, as when Hosios Loukas referred to his own tomb as a place where “God will bring glory . . . through the mysterious reasons.”¹⁶ Canopied installations,



Figure 8.8 Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, mosaic in the southwest squinch.

Photo: Hans A. Rosbach, image in the public domain: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hosios Loukas Katholikon \(nave, North-West squinch\) – Presentation 02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hosios_Loukas_Katholikon_(nave,_North-West_squinch)_-_Presentation_02.jpg).

therefore, functioned as both physical and conceptual frames, which facilitated the experience of these glorious spaces, marking independent places and the pious actions that occurred within. For that reason, canopies are integral to the meaning of these sacred spaces.

The altar is a major focus of every Byzantine church, where a bloodless sacrifice of Christ is preformed within the Liturgy of the Faithful. Therefore, it is by definition an ontological place because, within the religious construct of the place of the divine, the divine being is made manifest and present through the ritual in the existential place.¹⁷ As explained by St. Basil the Great (329–379) in his *Historia Mystagogica* and later accepted and widely cited by Germanus, the eighth-century Patriarch of Constantinople, who is best known for his explanation of the Byzantine liturgy, the altar ciborium stands for the “place” of “crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Christ,” and “the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.”¹⁸ Thus, it is imbued with both physical-architectural and conceptual meanings of sacred space. Moreover, the altar is directly related to the sacred body of Christ, the Eucharist, which is the most powerful intermediary in the covenant between the Lord and Christians.

The actual altar canopy from the Hosios Loukas’ katholikon, which framed the sacred, liturgical body of Christ during the performance of the Eucharist, is now lost. Yet its footings are preserved in the floors, mapping the location of this sacred space, long after the architectural frame (now preserved only in fragments) has gone (see Figures 8.3 and 8.6).¹⁹ The holy liturgy is still performed in this very spot, revealing how within Byzantine-rite churches, the rituals and their



Figure 8.9 Hosios Loukas, Phokis, Greece. Interior of the church naos, view towards east and the dome.

Photo: Hans A. Rosbach, image in the public domain: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hosios_Loukas_Katholikon_20091116-33.JPG.

place rather than physical objects that framed them were most essential. Remaining architectural fragments, confirm that the altar canopy was originally lavishly decorated in sculptural reliefs in marble and *champlevé* technique,²⁰ which partially speaks in favor of the Kantian notion of frame as *parergon*, as an addition to and embellishment of the (art) work.²¹ Frame as an exuberant embellishment for the sanctuary has also been discussed in the Bible; a frame embellished the tabernacle, both as a moveable tent and later around the installation of the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple, as well as the table for the holy bread within the tabernacle (cf. Ex 26:15–30 cf. 36:20–34; 25:25 cf. 37:12).²² These Old Testament objects not only prefigured the altar installations in Byzantine-rite churches; because altars stood for the presence of God, the entire altar installation in the

church sanctuary – when used within the liturgical services – stood for divine manifestation and the presence of Christ, who “became flesh and *tabernacled* among us” (Jn 1:14).

The preserved fragments of the altar canopy from Hosios Loukas also provide enough material to reconstruct its human-size and human-scale, which may be juxtaposed with a reference to the holy table from the Ark of the Covenant as described in Exodus (Ex 37:), specifying the cubit (or approximately the length of a man’s hand) as the measurement unit for architectural installations (see Figure 8.6). The exact measure of the cubit mentioned in the biblical text is indeterminable today, though it is most likely related to ancient measurement units and would fit somewhere between the short cubit (approximately 44 centimeters) and the royal cubit (approximately 52 centimeters). Thus, the approximately 80 centimeter span of the altar table from Hosios Loukas can be roughly equated to two cubits, which accords with the Lord’s instructions for the altar in the Old Testament.²³ By extension, within Byzantine thought, the altar canopy spanning here approximately 120 centimeters, can also be related to human scale and human activity “in accordance with the plan implanted in it [human activity] in a creative manner by the Cause that framed the Universe,” as John of Damascus wrote when discussing the two energies of Jesus Christ, divine and human,²⁴ thus reasoning that the human-made construct of the altar canopy is essentially simultaneously the divine frame ultimately done by the Framer (God). This notion of frame as identifying an ontological “being-place,” which ultimately results from God, the “Framer of the world,” is also recorded in the texts of Athanasius of Alexandria.²⁵ Some postmodernist and post-structuralist considerations of frames as discussed by Derrida and Deleuze, even if ontological and phenomenological, simply cannot apply here as they are related exclusively to various constructs of explicitly non-Godly frames.

To the north of the sanctuary, in the naos and at the junction of the two churches, there is another architectural frame that encloses holy space in Hosios Loukas – the saintly shrine of Hosios Loukas. The four columns and sculptural architraves of this canopy-like shrine survive, which, at one time, supported a pyramidal roof (see Figure 8.7). Since it is never mentioned as a canopy in the medieval hagiography of Hosios Loukas, some scholars maintain that this shrine is a rather modern installation.²⁶ Due to the hagiographical references and the establishment of the *anakomidi* rite performed on the occasion of the translation of the relics of Hosios Loukas from his original tomb to the new location in the church in the eleventh century, as well as the similarity of the shrine’s architectural sculpture to other twelfth- and thirteenth-century architectural sculpture in Byzantine churches in Greece, I concur with scholars who recognize it as a medieval tomb-shrine. As such, it is important for understanding certain dynamics of medieval concepts of framing sacred space.²⁷

Several distinctive phases in the framing of the tomb of Hosios Loukas are mentioned in his hagiography.²⁸ According to his *Life*, Hosios Loukas was buried under the floor of his monastic cell. Hence, when Hosios Loukas prophesized that “God will bring glory to this place through the mysterious reasons,”²⁹ a close association

was created between the glory of the church, and more precisely of the altar in the church sanctuary, and glory of his tomb-shrine. Indeed, a memorial in the form of the cruciform oratory was raised following the gushing of myrrh from the tomb and other miracles the saint performed at his tomb. To accommodate the growing number of pilgrims, the saintly relics were enshrined and embellished with local stone and enclosed by latticework. The faithful could venerate the body of the saint, their intercessor before the Lord, and venerate the presence of the divine at the shrine. The shrine itself was framed as “a place not to be trodden upon or touched except by those wishing to draw near to it in faith and much veneration.”³⁰ These words reveal the shrine as a glorious place, a place of the transcendental manifestation of God made available through the transcendence of the saint. In 1011, on the occasion of the yearly commemoration of the saint’s death, the bodily remains of Hosios Loukas were exhumed from the tomb in his cell and translated to another shrine.³¹ This shrine, which became the location for the saint’s miraculous interventions, was most likely constructed in its current location, in close proximity to the altar in the small chamber just to the northwest of the sanctuary.³²

The square-like floor plan of this small chamber, with internal dimensions of approximately 3.5 meters on each side, was covered with *opus sectile*. Its approximately 5-meter-high interior space was encased in ash-green marble, the vault and upper parts covered with golden mosaics and frescoes. A narrow opening, approximately 1 meter wide and some 3 meters high, set almost in the middle of the eastern wall of the chamber, received a canopy-like shrine for the saint (see Figures 8.3, 8.5, 8.7). This shrine may have been occasionally opened to reveal the relics to the faithful, but it definitely localized the place of the saintly presence for the devotees.³³

The shrine of Hosios Loukas, though visually and spatially similar to the altar canopy, developed independently.³⁴ However, the two framing canopies – over the altar and enshrining the holy relics – achieved close visual and spatial connections when the saint’s body was installed just northwest of the altar.³⁵ The design of both the altar and shrine canopies carried the essence of the framing of glorious spaces in Byzantine tradition, despite the highly complex changes in the entire church building. Meanwhile, the location of the shrine near the northern entrance to the katholikon also became a communication node, which enabled the pilgrims to approach the shrine, relatively independently from the liturgical service in the church, marked by another node within the sanctuary (see Figure 8.3).³⁶ During the eleventh-century enlargement of the monastery, the two surviving churches were joined to each other, so that the eastern half of the northern segment of the katholikon abutted the double narthex of the north church. The shrine of Hosios Loukas continued to mark a focal point for those pilgrims who came to the shrine to seek divine intercession from the saint. These pilgrims sometimes lit candles and occasionally slept next to the shrine.³⁷ Since the physical location of the shrine is most likely related to the original monastic cell of the sainted Loukas (and later, his original tomb), the shrine became a saintly house that stood for his presence. This perception of the sacredness of space endured even during physical absence of saintly body. For, the bodily relics were taken by the Crusaders in the thirteenth century and returned by the Vatican only in 1986.³⁸

The marble shrine of Hosios Loukas was therefore a peculiar spatial icon.³⁹ In addition to its formal visual and spatial qualities, its very materiality reinforced sacred meaning. The Byzantines often linked the shining properties of marbles to saint's visions, associating the brightness and the abundance of shining light with images of the heavenly kingdom.⁴⁰ The site-specific and haptic qualities of the shrine of Hosios Loukas were also combined with evocative invocations of various biblical shrines, thus placing the shrine of Hosios Loukas within the larger network of sacred spaces. The tomb of Hosios Loukas was sometimes described as a new Siloam,⁴¹ a pool of water in Jerusalem with healing properties,⁴² because the moisture on the surface on the saintly tomb had miraculous properties.⁴³ Hosios Loukas would often appear in the dreams of faithful as a radiant body, floating above the floor, as in the dream experienced by a certain Christopher, who slept near the saintly shrine.⁴⁴ Such a vision of the de-materialized saint would resemble Byzantine icons, exemplified by the well-known image of the icon of the Mother of God from the Rabbula Gospels, who is depicted as if beneath a canopy (see Figure 8.1). The canopy-like shrine of the saint would have been critical in providing a spatial frame for the envisioned saint.

The micro-architectural form of the shrine provides a key to understanding the sensibilities of the Byzantine beholders, who, when approaching the shrine, most likely anticipated in their minds a personal encounter with the sacred. At the same time, the architectural frame of the shrine physically restricted access of the beholders to its interior space. Thus, the canopy architecture maintained the perceived boundaries dividing the earthly and the divine by separating the sacred place where the mysterious presence of the saint abided from the immediate surroundings of the shrine where the faithful gathered. The shrine was an enclosed yet still accessible space, so that encounters with the holy were not just made possible, but enhanced by the architectural framing and its setting within the church.

At the shrine, the beholder's perception is closely related to the human bodies of the gathered pilgrims and the holy body of the saint. Built at a human scale, this architectural installation yet creates the perception that Hosios Loukas is actually larger-than-life (see Figure 8.5). The shrine is so tightly built that it is just large enough to accommodate the bodily remains of the saint, thereby sparking visitors' imaginations with what appears to be the overwhelming presence of the saint related to the size of his shrine (see Figure 8.7). This sense that Loukas is actively present within and beyond the confines of his shrine is further emphasized by his many images represented in the church in various locations: there are two near the shrine, one done in fresco on the eastern wall just above the shrine and the other done in mosaic and placed high above the eye level on the western wall directly facing the shrine; other images are in the northeast and northwest chapels of the katholikon. The two monumental, larger-than-life bust portraits near the shrine show him in an active position with outstretched arms praying towards the east (see image on the cover page). By presenting images of Hosios Loukas near his shrine, the perception of the dynamic and multifocal presence of the deified saint in relation to the shrine associated with his earthly body is amplified. John of Damascus discusses the deification of man as a union that preserves both human and divine natures according to divine providence.⁴⁵ Within such a context, the

most intimate and paradoxically large size in comparison to customarily used icon paintings of the saints and at the same time small size of the shrine itself based on human scale within church space becomes irrelevant, highlighting instead the perception of the grand scale of the sacred being and its overarching sacred space the saintly shrine denotes.

The life-like mosaic portrait of Hosios Loukas on the western wall opposite the shrine further mimics the position of the faithful when they pray in the church and shows the saint with outstretched arms acting as an instrument of God and simultaneously embracing the perceived personal space of a beholder (see image on the cover page). Such a complex spatial installation with images seems to defy the existence of the architectural and conceptual frame between the space of the beholder and the space of the saint, thus approaching Derrida's concepts about the dissolution of the frame.⁴⁶ Yet, this deconstruction of the frame would remain only on the level of perception that effectively manipulated the beholder's sense of proportion and size. The architectural frame, revealing its contents in the space within or above it, actively communicated a message that a saint was the same as any human beholder in God's sight. The frame and framing of human body and intellect denoted the frailty of man (cf. Job 33:6, referring to the original formation of man as in Genesis 2:7),⁴⁷ and the creation of the ultimate Framer beyond human activity, beyond space and time. The Byzantines addressed this seemingly paradoxical relationship between the human and divine framing. Hence, John of Damascus writes:

For the very Mother of God in some marvelous manner was the means of fashioning the Framer of all things and of bestowing manhood on the God and Creator of all, Who deified the nature that He assumed, while the union preserved those things that were united just as they were united, that is to say, not only the divine nature of Christ but also His human nature, not only that which is above us but that which is of us.⁴⁸

The movement of the pilgrims and churchgoers within the church space further allowed for a multi-focal understanding of the sacred space outlined by multiple architectural frames. In that respect, the experience of a three-dimensional frame in the actual church space closely relates to texts by Deleuze, who argues against early-modern/Renaissance, single-point of view and representational experience of architecture, and by engaging with the lived and embodied experience expands upon Derrida's frame. We can recreate several critical trajectories of the pilgrims' movements within the church space in Hosios Loukas (see Figure 8.3).

The visitors coming to the shrine would presumably first pass through the north doors of the katholikon to encounter the shrine in the tiny corridor. They would behold the sacred on personal, intimate level and at human-scale because the measurements of the shrine were just made to accommodate a standing human figure. Then, they would proceed toward the main space of the katholikon, eventually venerating the icons on the main temple screen, also known as iconostasis, which is yet another frame that separates the sanctuary space from the nave of the

church and provides a kind of spiritual and material interface for contemplating the power of saints and heavenly beings.⁴⁹

Leaving the narrow corridor with the saintly shrine, and following the veneration of icons on the iconostasis, both in their way standing for the presence of God, the faithful would find themselves in the open space of the katholikon. Here, they would enter yet another canopy-like space – the immense space below the main church dome (see Figure 8.9). Emphasized by the hovering image of Christ Pantokrator (Christ the All-Mighty, the Ruler of All) at the apex in the main dome, the pilgrims would have been united with monks and other churchgoers who had their own routes of movement within the church. United in this lofty space, all of them would have been overwhelmed with the feeling of the presence of God inside the monumental church-canopy as they became the living part of it, following the Orthodox belief that Church is not just a place of worship but also the worshipping community, the two inseparable from each other and insufficient without each other. John of Damascus speaks of such a union of divine and human as of “which is not that of high above us but also that which is of us.”⁵⁰

Looking at the post-Byzantine fresco of Christ Pantokrator in Hosios Loukas, we may creatively recreate the original Byzantine mosaic, comparable to the one preserved in the Daphni monastery, also from the Middle Byzantine period (Figure 8.10).⁵¹ The monumental figure of Christ, soaring high above the churchgoers,

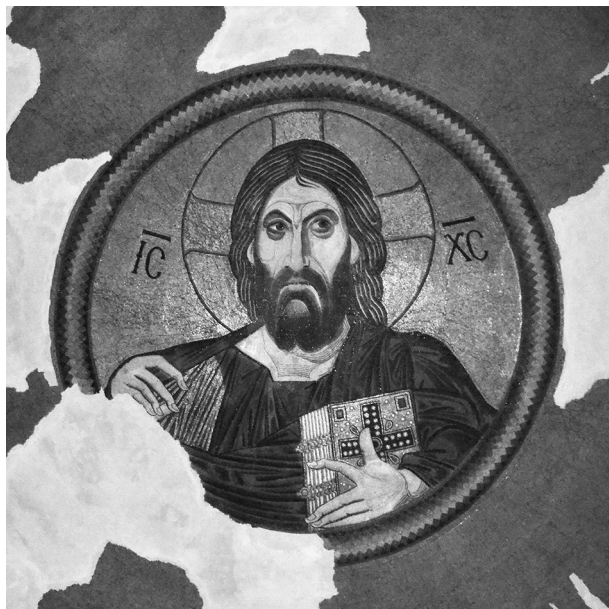


Figure 8.10 Daphne, Greece. The interior of the katholikon showing mosaic of Christ Pantokrator in the apex of the dome, eleventh century.

Photo: Stavros Mamaloukos.

is framed by the roundel; its geometry suggesting a continual circular movement without beginning or end. The polychromatic roundel of Christ the Ruler and Framed of all evokes emanating light.⁵² The rainbow becomes a visual reminder of “the everlasting covenant between God and everything that is upon the earth” (Gen 9:16–17),⁵³ thus for believers reiterating the notions of the Godly frame and the covenant between God and earthly, which He created.

High above, in one of the squinches of this massive, church-sized canopy, in the scene of the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, a two-dimensional canopy signifies the sacred Temple and the archetype of a Byzantine-rite church,⁵⁴ which received its new role through Christ-God Manifested (see Figure 8.8). The so-called Pseudo-Kufic inscriptions depicted on the Temple recall the Middle Eastern realm, as the Greek-speaking Byzantines might have understood it. The canopy becomes a sophisticated intellectual interface for the Holy Land and sacred history framed by and framing Christ and both his human and divine natures.⁵⁵ Appropriately two-dimensional and impalpable, represented high above the faithful, the canopy-like Temple becomes an intellectual and religious frame that structurally and conceptually supports the boundary-less perception of the church dome interior in which almighty Christ is depicted.

Finally, the monks, pilgrims, and churchgoers would exit the church either through the main western entrance, back through the northern door, or through the subsidiary space through the northwestern door of the katholikon, once again revealing a multi-focal and multi-directional experience and memory of the space (see Figure 8.3). For example, the eighteenth-century Russian pilgrim Barsky made a drawing of the shrine from the vantage point of the south gallery (Figure 8.11).⁵⁶ We can hypothesize that Barsky’s point of view indicates his movement within the church along the north-south axis and through the major space of the church below the dome, similar to other pilgrims’ movements as they continue today.

The sacred images and canopies associated with Hosios Loukas hence allow for site-specific and singular rather than impersonal and generic experiences of sacredness; they reveal different heuristic and material frames within the church and as well as polyvalent relations between the sacred space and the human body – both of the beholders and of the holy beings. They seemingly resolve the transcendental and empirical in the Deleuzian sense that “the conditions of experience . . . must become conditions of real experience.”⁵⁷ Yet, despite being constructed by men, such spaces were perceived by the monks, pilgrims, and religious churchgoers as characteristic of the divine, since the essence of the design of their frames was related to the “blueprints” Lord gave when the first tabernacle was constructed as a model for other sacred spaces.

*

We can now turn to a discussion of positivistic modern philosophical thoughts about frames and framing and how they relate to Byzantine concepts. Kant introduced space as a ground for all appearances – physical and metaphysical – which

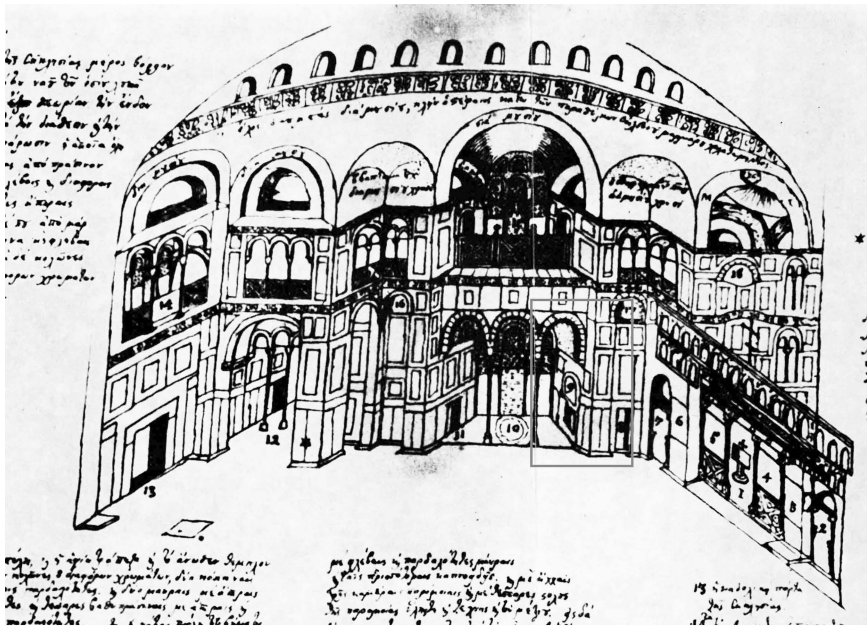


Figure 8.11 Drawing of the interior of Hosios Loukas by a Russian pilgrim Barsky in 1745 that shows the view from a gallery under the main dome of the katholikon towards the shrine of Hosios Loukas to the northeast.

From: *Stranstvovaniia Vasil'ja Grigoroviča-Barasko po svjatyj mestam vostoka s 1723 do 1747 g.* (Sankt Peterburg: Tipogr. V. Kiršbauma, 1886).

is critical for a deeper understanding of the importance of religious space in Byzantine-rite churches, as well. His construct of the frame as *parergon*, as a purely decorative feature, is not fully applicable in the Byzantine cultural sphere, however, where the frame and its perceived beauty always fully carried the associated meanings of glory. In other words, either as a three-dimensional canopied frame of the altar or a saintly shrine, a two-dimensional mosaic canopy that represented the Temple in Jerusalem, or a rainbow-like roundel around the body of Christ, the architectural frame in the Byzantine context carried theological meanings of the covenant between God and man. Such a covenant presupposed the body and space, the connection between the faithful and the divine, between the earthly and the transcendental. And while the idea of the transcendental was very strong in Kant's philosophy, it was ultimately rejected by Derrida and Deleuze, whose philosophies remained deeply secular.⁵⁸

Even if we set aside Derrida's strong non-religious and even anti-religious thought, his framing, when applied to Byzantine architecture, simply transgresses the boundaries dividing the interior and exterior space of the frame. At the same time, Derrida deconstructs the sense of interiority as inner substance and the sense

of exteriority as the source of truth outside experience and the experiential; but this difference is firmly grounded in the Byzantines' strong perception of the separation of divine and human realms, as reiterated by John of Damascus.⁵⁹

Deleuze's framing, though fragmentary and incoherent, is attractive because of its relation to architecture and the multi-focal nature of the experience of architecture, which may be applied to the multifocal experience of space within the church as marked by various canopies in the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas. Perhaps even more applicable is that Deleuze touches the concept of the "non-inhabited" space and "non-human" space, which is a characteristic of transcendental, non-physical spiritual space. For Deleuze, it is above all the issue of sensation and perception of space, and the search for the juncture where the space of the world and the space of the individual unfold and intersect, a space "without distance, at ground level" from which "no chasm, fold or hiatus escapes."⁶⁰ The focus is on the reversal of phenomenological thinking, according to which thought itself depends on men's relation to the world and that which the human capacity to reason (sacred) space draws from these relations.⁶¹ In the works by Deleuze and Guattari that examine space in particular, this relation between the place in space and the thought about how it can be reversed, on one side, and then how this reversed thinking is related to the world, on the other side, are fundamentally spatial relations, and depend upon thought and rethinking such relations anew. Deleuze argues for the logic of the space, which is the logic of multiplicity itself as defined by "the fold."

Following the model of Leibniz's monad – the idea that the whole universe is contained within each being – Deleuze argues that the process of folding (or doubling) constitutes the basic unit of existence and can be compared to architecture.⁶² In other words, the thought and perception of the self is doubled (folded) into the thought of another, re-creatively forming in the process a new fold. Deleuze explains the concept of the fold by using an architectonic and framing model of a Baroque structure with two floors.⁶³ The lower floor with a door and windows is the world of senses; it represents the matter in and of the world; it represents the measurable domain. The upper floor is dark immeasurable space entirely closed in on itself; it contains innate ideas and the incorporeal (spiritual) self; it resists any representation. The fold – as a kind of surface and harmony between these two realms – involves an opening of the closed chamber on the upper floor and the affirmation of difference and communication.⁶⁴ Baroque architecture is further seen in terms of its materiality and corporeality, with its excessive "ornamental exteriority and evasive proliferation," and "bringing to the fore the question of the surface."⁶⁵ This apparent construct approaches the Byzantine concept of "reflection," according to which the light and beauty of God is received and reflected by angels as ontological mediators between God and humans.⁶⁶ Moreover, Deleuze's engagement with the Baroque mode is worth exploring within a Christian context of the Baroque as an inherently ontological construct, which emphasizes the coexistence of the exteriority and interiority through different type of materiality, sensibilities, and scales. Yet, Deleuze shifts his theoretical propositions for the fold far away from the religious and spiritual. His fold as coexistence, multiplicity, and complexity, moves towards searching for subjectivity and perceptions of

self within art, science, and technology, and eventually towards the transcendental understood as aesthetical but virtual rather than real and immanently spiritual.

The logic of the Deleuzian “the fold” also does not allow for the universal logic of space nor is comparable to the logic of the senses and, by extension, of sensation and perception.⁶⁷ Framing as a concept and design in Hosios Loukas, where various canopied installations were enriched with site-specific images and relics, allows us to discuss the multiplicity of events and the perception of the multiplicity of experiences in the church. Two-sided relations between the earthly and the divine were reinforced through the micro-architectural arrangements within the larger space of the church. Yet, during liturgical and devotional rites, the divine presence and the believers would occupy the same “hieroplastic space,” which is at the same time earthly, heavenly, and beyond. “Hieroplastic space” in which spiritual phenomena are visually and spatially presented was introduced through the concept of “hieroplastia,” understood as a fragmented trace of theophany by (Pseudo) Dionysius the Areopagite, whose preserved writings can be dated to the sixth century.⁶⁸ Canopies are then spatial icons that architecturally frame theophany while, as further explained by the Areopagite, their meaning could be extracted via human intellect from the appearances (phenomena) they put forward.

For Deleuze, the ultimate source of thought is always within men or human constructs (be it sociopolitical, economical-financial, or technological), but never teleological and divine, as the Byzantine theologians and philosophers maintained. Like Derrida and other scholars of the twentieth-century French philosophical trends, Deleuze grounds his post-structuralist thought around the semiotic “signifier-signified” discourse. In Byzantine thought and practice, however, the signifier becomes the signified as believers during religious rituals searched to unite with Christ, not with the sign of Christ.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Deleuze investigates “the final end for the whole of divine creation.”⁷⁰ He focuses on non-Godly and homocentric; his frame – or rather its less rigid counterpart “the fold” – fully dissolves the separation between various entities and transfigures various substances in the process.

As an architectural *parti* – an overall guiding idea for design – understood as originally devised by the divine creator, the canopy was a departure as well as a final point for the design concept of the sacred space in the Byzantine church of Hosios Loukas, and Byzantine-rite churches in general.⁷¹ As the actual materialization of the framing of sacred space was complicated due to technical and utilitarian issues, by extension, it became more intertwined with the issues of size, scale, massing, transparency, visibility, and legibility in the actual church space, like in the case of the highly complex compounds of Hosios Loukas. The canopy as a *parti* and a frame, nevertheless, remained the overarching idea that strengthened rather than dissolved the final outcome and message. This analysis also suggests that the Byzantines perceived canopies as architectural and conceptual frames that provided both divine and earthly entities with their appropriate properties, while preserving their true natures as divine or earthly, even if occasionally seemingly overlapping within the liminal space or surface of the frame and the framed. John of Damascus writes about the framing of the universe, imbuing aspects of

the divine and earthly in overlapping spaces, each within the other, and yet also distinct.⁷² Similarly, for Athanasius of Alexandria, the Framer is God, and through His son Christ, all creation is framed (made) and imbued with fitting properties.⁷³

Ultimately, Byzantine thought does not negate God the Framer and the intelligent creator, and remains in opposition to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophical notions about frame and framing as purely rational social constructs, that negate “glorious spaces.” According to Byzantine sources, the essence of architectural frames is not just a practical or structural necessity, partial to the life within. On the contrary, architectural frames, such as the here analyzed canopies in the monastery of Hosios Loukas, were ontological constructs for “glorious spaces” and functioned as “spatial icons” that aided the believers in their spiritual quests and how they perceived and positioned themselves within larger networks of sacredness. These frames are also deeply anti-illusionary because they never dissolved the strongly understood and perceived distinction between the earthly and heavenly realms.

Notes

- 1 Meyer Shapiro, “On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image Signs.” *Semiotica* 1 (1969), 223–242; Werner Ehlich, *Bilderrahmen von der Antike bis zur Romantik* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1979); John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987); Christine Sciacca, *Building the Medieval World* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum; London: British Library, 2010); Herbert R. Broderick, “Some Attitudes toward the Frame in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries.” *Artibus et Historiae* 5 (1982), 31–42; “Frame.” In *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*. Colum Hourihane, vol. 2, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 554–571.
- 2 See also the chapters by Lidova and Milanović in this volume.
- 3 François Bucher, “Micro-Architecture as the Idea of Gothic Theory and Style.” *Gesta* 15 (1976), 71–89, created a platform for the studies of spatial architectural frames and micro-architecture in the context of Gothic churches. Bucher defined micro-architecture as miniature architectural structures frequently used as church furnishings, such as altar canopies, font canopies, saintly shrines, and reliquaries. Since Bucher’s work, scholars have furthered studies of such structures both within the medieval West and Byzantium.

Achim Timmermann, “Micro-Architecture.” In *Grove Art Online: Oxford Art Online* (Oxford University Press), www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2216986, accessed November 16, 2013; Achim Timmerman, *Real Presence: Sacramental Houses and the Body of Christ, c. 1270–1600* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009); *Mikroarchitektur im Mittelalter: Ein gattungsübergreifendes Phänomen zwischen Realität und Imagination; Beiträge der gleichnamigen Tagung im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg vom 26. bis 29. Oktober 2005*. Christine Kratzke, ed. (Leipzig: Kratzke, 2008); Mabi Angar, “Stiftermodelle in Byzanz und bei christlichorthodoxen Nachbarkulturen.” In *Mikroarchitekturen im Mittelalter*. Christine Kratzke, ed. (Leipzig: Kratzke, 2008), 433–453; Чедомила Маринковић, *Слика подигнуте цркве: Представе архитектуре на ктиторским портретима у српској и византијској уметности* (Београд: Бонарт, 2007); Slobodan Ćurčić et al., *Architecture as Icon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*. A. Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Indrik, 2011); Alexei Lidov, “Heavenly Jerusalem: The

Byzantine Approach.” *Jewish Art* 25 (1999), 340–353; Maria Cristina Carile, “Buildings in Their Patrons’ Hands? The Multiform Function of Small Size Models Between Byzantium and Transcaucasia.” *Kunsttexte.de* 3 (2014), 1–14.

Among publications dealing with specifically architectural frames in Byzantium and Western Europe are: *Thresholds of the Sacred*. Sharon E. J. Gerstel, ed. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006), Jacqueline E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), and Jelena Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). See also chapters by Marsengill, Milanović, and Dennis in this volume.

- 4 See also the discussion on the agency of animated sacred space in the chapter by Dennis in this volume.
- 5 Canopy as a four-columned structure with or without roof – by virtue of its physical form, also represents a basic architectural, three-dimensional frame. More on the canopy as an architectural *parti* in Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*, passim, and esp. 195–206 about canopies in Hosios Loukas. By re-thinking some of the conclusions from my previous research on canopies of Hosios Loukas, this chapter examines in particular the mechanisms of the framing and perceptions of the sacred devised by the Byzantines, and juxtaposes them with more recent scholarship on the topic of framing.
- 6 On the scholarly split between the performative and representational understanding of Byzantine architecture, see also discussion in Jelena Bogdanović, “The Rhetoric and Performativity of Light in the Sacred Space: A Case Study of The Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria.” In *Hierotopy of Fire and Light in the Culture of the Byzantine World*. A. Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Theoria, 2013), 282–304.
- 7 See also Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*, passim, esp. 295–299.
- 8 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* [De fide orthodoxa]. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 9. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., and E.W. Watson and L. Pullan, trans. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1899); also on-line www.newadvent.org/fathers/33041.htm; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Selected Works and Letters*. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 4. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. and R. Payne-Smith, trans. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892); also on-line www.newadvent.org/fathers/2806039.htm.
- 9 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 2, ch. 29.
- 10 Ibid., book 3, ch. 15.
- 11 Among numerous translations of Immanuel Kant’s, *Critique of the Judgment* (1790, second edition 1793) is the Cambridge edition: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), with reference to *parerga* on 110–111.
- 12 Jacques Derrida, “Parergon.” In *The Truth in Painting*. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, trans. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 15–148; critique of Kant’s “Parergon,” esp. 55–73.
- 13 Gilles Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963); Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*. T. Conley, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. P. Patton, trans. (London: The Athlone Press, 1994).
- 14 The critical texts regarding the architectural provenance and dating of the Hosios Loukas monastery are: Robert W. Schultz and Sidney H. Barnsley, *The monastery of Saint Luke* (London: Committee for the Committee of the School by Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1901); Eustathios Stikas, *Tò Οικοδομικόν Χρονικόν τῆς Μονῆς Ὁσίου Λουκά Φωκίδος* (The Architectural History of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phokis) (Athens: Athēnais Archaeologikēs Hetaireias, 1970); Nikolaos Oikonomides, “The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas.” *Dumbarton Oak Papers* 46 (1992),

- 245–255; Paulos Mylonas, “Nouvelles remarques sur le complexe de Saint-Luc en Phocide.” *Cahiers archéologiques* 40 (1992), 115–122; Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 297–300, 383–387. Contemporaneous medieval references about Hosios Loukas, the monastery and its architecture come from Loukas’ posthumous *Life*, compiled by an anonymous disciple: *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris* [henceforth *Life*]. Carolyn L. and W. Robert Connor, trans. (Brookline: Hellenic College Press, 1994). Dimitra Kotoula, “The Tomb of the Founder-Saint.” In *Founders and Re-Founders of Byzantine Monasteries*. Margaret Mullett, ed. (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 6.3, 2007), 210–233, esp. 220–224, provides a succinct overview of the major events in the life of Hosios Loukas and his monastery.
- 15 Stikas, *The Architectural History*, 114–127; *Life* 81.5–8.
- 16 *Life*, citation on p. 109; also chs. 64, 66.
- 17 On the ontological place as defined in European philosophical thought see also Martin Heidegger, “An Ontological Consideration of Place.” In *The Question of Being*. J. T. Wilde and W. Kluback, trans. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1958), esp. 18–25.
- 18 Basil *Historia Mystagogica* 4 (p. 258.18), according to Lampe (1964–1968) 753; *St. Germanus of Constantinople on the Divine Liturgy*. P. Meyendorff, ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 58–59.
- 19 The sockets in the floor of bema for the altar of the katholikon, were recorded by Schultz and Barnsley, *The Monastery of Saint Luke*, ground plan and Stikas, *Ὁ Κτίσις τοῦ Καθολικοῦ τῆς Μονῆς Ὁσίου Λουκᾶ* (Athens: Archeological Society of Athens, 1974/5), fig. 12.
- 20 Laskarina Boura, *Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος του ναού της Παναγίας στο μοναστήρι του Οσίου Λουκά* [*Ho glyptos diakosmos tou naou tēs Panagias sto monasatēri tou Hosiou Louka*] (Athens: I en Athinai Archaiologikī Etaireia, 1980); *ibid.*, “Architectural Sculptures of the Twelfth and the Early Thirteenth Centuries in Greece.” *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* 9 (1977–1979), 63–72.
- 21 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 110–111.
- 22 On the frame for the table for the holy bread in Ex 25:25: *And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.*

On the frame of the tabernacle in Ex 26:15–30: *And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver; sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.*

And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou

shalt overlay the bars with gold. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.

- 23 Ex 37:10: *And he made the table of shittim wood: two cubits was the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.*
- 24 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 3, ch. 15.
- 25 Athanasius of Alexandria, *Selected Works and Letters*, book 2, ch. XVIII, book 2, discourse II.
- 26 Stikas, *The Architectural History*, 174–178; *ibid.*, 'Ο Κτίσις, 103–127.
- 27 See, for example, Nano Chatzidakis, *Hosios Loukas. Sources, Donors and Dates of Monuments* (Athens: Melissa, 1997), 10, with references to works by Ch. and L. Bouras.
- 28 Kotoula, "The Tomb of the Founder-Saint," 210–233, esp. 220–224.
- 29 *Life*, chs. 64, 66, esp. 66.1–21.
- 30 *Life*, ch. 66, esp. 66.16–21.
- 31 According to the canticle from the *anakomidi*, the translation of relics of Hosios Loukas happened on May 3rd, which coincided with the feast of the Ascension. In the eleventh century, the feast occurred on that date only three times: in 1011, 1022, and 1095. The author of the canticle speaks also of the "invasion of the Scythians" a phrase, which possibly refers to the Bulgarians, thus suggesting the dating of the canticle before the abolition of the state of the Bulgarian sovereign Samuel (r. 976–1014), and therefore the year 1011 as the most probable year of the translation of the relics. See Manolis Chatzidakis, "A propos de la date et du fondateur de Saint-Luc." *Cahiers archéologiques* 19 (1969), 127–150. The inscription 1014 from the sculpture in the monastery of Aliveri on Euboea, extremely close to the sculptural remains found in the monastery of Hosios Loukas, suggests that the katholikon had been accomplished by 1011, rather than by 1022. On the 1011 date: Nicolas Oikonomides, "The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 245–255.
- 32 The tomb is variously described in Greek text of the *Life* as: σορός, [soros] (*Life*, ch. 81), λάρναξ [larnax] (*Life*, ch. 82), τάφος [taphos] (*Life*, ch. 79) or θήκη [theke] (*Life*, ch. 74). These terms may refer to a room or chamber, but also to the tomb chest and sarcophagus. The tomb of Hosios Loukas is described as being within the church, probably in a naos. Most telling is the account of a certain John, who had problems with his feet, so when he "enter[ed] the divine church, prostrated himself at the miraculous tomb." *Life*, ch. 79.23–25.
- 33 On the visually and physically restricted access to the holy relics and icons in order to evoke spiritual seeing and contemplation, see also chapters by Lidova, Milanović, and Dennis in this volume.
- 34 See also my developed discussion on the relationship between altar and shrine installations in Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*, 36–62, 77–82, 195–206.
- 35 On holistic design for larger architectural complexes even if taken over prolonged period of time, see also the chapter by Belgin-Henry in this volume.
- 36 P. Mylonas, "Gavits arméniens et Litae bizantines. Observations nouvelles sur le complexe de Saint-Luc en Phocide." *Cahiers archéologiques* 38 (1990), 99–122; and *idem.*, "Nouvelles remarques sur le complexe de Saint-Luc en Phocide." *Cahiers archéologiques* 40 (1992), 115–122.
- 37 Christopher Walter, "New Look at the Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier." *Revue des études byzantines* 51 (1993), 203–228, esp. 223.
- 38 In 1204, shortly after the huge sequential building campaigns of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Boniface de Montferrat, king of Thessaloniki, drove the Orthodox monks from Hosios Loukas. From 1205 until 1308 the De la Roche family owned the monastery, and afterwards until the Turkish conquest in 1460, it was in the possession of the Catalans. Sometime during the thirteenth century, the bodily remains of Hosios Loukas were removed by the Crusaders and ultimately ended up in the Vatican.

- Hieronimos Liapis, *The Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Boeotia* (Athens: publisher not specified, 2005), 8–10.
- 39 On similar construct of a spatial icon in the Albenga baptistery, see the chapter by Dennis in this volume.
- 40 The use of local stone for the shrine of Hosios Loukas as recorded in his *Life* and the later use of marble for the shrine in the katholikon, for its structural, practical, and aesthetic properties, also seems to have been a deliberate choice for piety. The Byzantine use of colored marbles was related to their elusive and mysterious properties. The veins and abstract patterns of the marble slabs were sometimes experienced as figurative images, just like painted ones. George P. Majeska, “Notes on the Archaeology of St. Sophia at Constantinople: The Green Marble Bands on the Floor.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32 (1978), 299–308.
- 41 *Life*, ch. 69.
- 42 Jn 9.7–11.
- 43 *Life*, ch. 71, 72, 73, 83.
- 44 *Life*, ch. 82 cf. 63. 53–55: “An exceedingly precious purple cloth was spread out over the earth and above it the great man was standing, gleaming wondrously and indescribably both from his body and from his clothing and seen entirely in light.”
- 45 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 3, ch. 12.
- 46 Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 55–75.
- 47 Job 33:6: *Behold, I am according to thy wish in God’s stead: I also am formed out of the clay.*
 Genesis 2:7: And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.
- 48 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 3, ch. 12.
- 49 Among excellent works on the iconostasis and its role within services in the Byzantine church are: *Thresholds of the Sacred*. Sharon E. J. Gerstel, ed. (*op. cit.*); Iconostasis, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress, 2000); Gordana Babić, “O živopisanom ukrasu oltarskih pregrada.” *Zbornik Matice Srpske za Likovne Umetnosti* 11 (1975), 3–49; Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*. D. Sheehan and O. Andrejev, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000).
- 50 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 3, ch. 12.
- 51 Technical analysis of mosaics from the Byzantine monasteries of Daphne and Hosios Loukas suggests the likely possibility that they were executed in the same technique and, therefore, can be closely related to each other. R. Arletti, C. Fiori, and M. Vandini, “A Study of Glass Tesserae from Mosaics in the Monasteries of Daphni and Hosios Loukas (Greece).” *Archaeometry* 52/5 (2010), 796–815.
- 52 See also Slobodan Ćurčić, “Divine Light: Constructing the Immaterial in Byzantine Art and Architecture.” In *Architecture of the Sacred: Space, Ritual, and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 307–337.
- 53 Gen 9:16–17: “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”
- 54 See, for example, Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003).
- 55 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 3, ch. 12.
- 56 *Stranstvovanija Vasil’ja Grigoroviča-Barskago po svjatym mestam vostoka s 1723 po 1747 g.* (Sankt Peterburg: Tipogr. V. Kiršbauma, 1886); Barsky visited Hosios Loukas in 1745.
- 57 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 68.
- 58 See, for example, Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 57, 66; Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, 36–37; cf. 24–25;

- 59 Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 57, 66, 73; cf. John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 3, ch. 12.
- 60 Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guatarri, *What Is Philosophy?* H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, trans. (London: Verso, 1994), 210.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Tom Conley, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 39; Simon Sullivan, "Fold." In *Deleuze Dictionary*. Adrian Parr, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 107–108.
- 63 See also Graham Livesey, "Fold + Architecture." In *Deleuze Dictionary*. Adrian Parr, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 108–109.
- 64 Sullivan, "Fold," 107–108; J. Roffe, "Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995)." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. www.iep.utm.edu/deleuze/, accessed September 19, 2015.
- 65 Helen Hills et al., "Conceptions and Determinations of Baroque and New Baroque in the Last Decade." *Perspective* 1 (2015), 15–36, citation on p. 15.
- 66 See, for example, Dionysius the Areopagite in Divine Names IV.22 and Celestial Hierarchy III.2.
- 67 Sullivan, "Fold," 107–108; Livesey, "Fold + Architecture," 108–109.
- 68 Dionysius the Areopagite introduced the term hieroplastia in Celestial Hierarchy II.1. On the importance of hieroplastia for the study of Byzantine icons, see Filip Ivanović, *Symbol and Icon: Dionysius the Areopagite and the Iconoclastic Crisis* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 52–53; Alexei Lidov, "Creating the Sacred Space: Hierotopy as a New Field of Cultural History." In *Spazi e percorsi sacri*. C. Cremonesi and L. Carnevale, eds. (Padua: Libreriauniversitaria.it, 2015), 61–90, esp. 76. n. 50; Cornelia A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Person in Eternity: Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), esp. n. 26. For the discussion of hieroplastia within Byzantine architecture: Jelena Bogdanović, "The Performativity of Shrines in a Byzantine Church: The Shrines of St. Demetrios." In *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*. A. Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 275–316, esp. n. 65. On Areopagite thought, see also chapter by Ivanović in this volume.
- 69 See also Bogdanović, "The Rhetoric and Performativity of Light in the Sacred Space," 282–304.
- 70 Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 61.
- 71 Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space*.
- 72 John of Damascus, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book 2. ch. 29, book 3 ch. 12 and 15.
- 73 Athanasius of Alexandria, *Selected Works and Letters*, letter 2461.

9 Conclusions

Iconic perception and noetic contemplation of the sacred

Jelena Bogdanović with Katherine Marsengill

The rich empirical material detailed in this volume on the perceptions of the body and sacred space in the medieval Mediterranean promotes pluralist visions of the encounters with the holy. By applying a variety of sources (visual, architectural, archeological, historical, theological, and philosophical), as well as a diversity of methodological approaches and research agendas that stem from the different schools of thought on the sacred to which we belong, our chapters converge on several critical themes that confirm the intimate relations between the body and sacred space. Our case studies especially highlight four themes: the agency of the body and sacred space in the perception of the sacred; the notions of iconic perception and the chain of interrelated stimuli in bridging the material and sacred in the abstract; the questions of liminality; and the interrelations between iconic perception and noetic contemplation of the sacred. The following themes reveal the major ontological and spatial depths of our study, and show how in the medieval Mediterranean encounters with the holy were based on ontological, iconic perception and highly sophisticated inclusive noetic contemplation. Iconic perception and noetic contemplation ultimately point to how early Christians and Byzantines teleologically viewed the divine source of the sacred and its totality while bringing together closely, but never fully dissolving the distinctions between human and divine realms. The revealed mechanisms of iconic perception and noetic contemplation of the sacred have a potential to shape our knowledge of the meanings of the sacred for people in the medieval Mediterranean, as well as to improve our understanding of the liminality of the profane and sacred in religious contexts.

The agency of body and space in the perception of the sacred

In his chapter on the cosmological structuring of the sacred, Ivanović follows the Areopagite's thought to show how medieval Christians perceived the totality of their existence within a two-tiered cosmological structure that embraced two mirroring but distinct realms – the celestial and the inhabited. The celestial refers to a sacred (divine) order, a state of understanding and activity (*energia*) approximating as closely as possible the divine. In the process of rising spiritually up to God, the ultimate creator, Ivanović contends that the contemplation of the sacred happens with the help of material things that partake in ultimate, divine creation

and the cosmological order. The divine agency remains absolute, but the agency of the human body and presence in space, which puts forward the manifestations of the divine, also becomes prominent. The sensible things reflect divine beauty and wisdom, while sacred rites manifest the active divine presence in a physical space. Such early medieval philosophical thought aligns with the ideas on the active divine agency put forward in modern concepts of *hierophany* and *hierotopy* by Mircea Eliade and Alexei Lidov, respectively.

One major criticism of Eliade's concept of *hierophany* concerns his idea that the sacred is defined by the relationships between God and the places of divine manifestations, which often results in an understanding of the sacred as an absolute reality, autonomous of any human being.¹ Similarly, Lidov's concept does not negate active, divine and non-human will, which he strongly locates in "miraculous" events. Yet, *hierotopy*, in contrast to *hierophany*, emphasizes human active will in the creation of sacred space. Still, neither of these two concepts accommodates positivist, non-teleological studies of the sacred that insist on individual encounters with the holy, examined through different kinds of actions Christians undertake in order to define the relation between their God and the places of their lives. A quest for a bottom-up, essentially homocentric, approach was a starting point for the majority of the chapters and case studies found in this volume. Several chapters in our volume, however, conclude that even when nuanced examinations are undertaken and Byzantine and modern concepts juxtaposed, it must be acknowledged that Byzantine society was highly sophisticated and at the same time persistent and focused in their teleological thought.

Marsengill examines the role of icons in the formulation of the perception of the human body and proposes that the conceptual similarities between living holy persons and painted icons in Byzantium were based on culturally conditioned expectations. By highlighting in particular the holy man Neophytos, Marsengill demonstrates how the agency of St. Neophytos' body became the icon of Christ and how, in the process, Neophytos' reliance on painted icons to secure his identity suggests perceptions and justifications by the Byzantines that what is visible in a saint and his painted icon is the medium of communication between humans and the divine. Yet, according to the Byzantine sources, Neophytos claimed that this process was possible only through holy grace or divine agency. Moreover, Neophytos built during his lifetime a specially designated area for himself, which he called *hagiasterion* (a sanctuary). Again, even if human-made, the contemporaneous sources claim that the *hagiasterion* in his cave church that he called New Sion, was abounding in God's providence.

Bogdanović illustrates how architectural installations associated with another holy man, Hosios Loukas, in the eponymous monastic complex were eventually understood as being "glorious spaces" made by people, but people who memorialized miraculous events on the site and made these structures with biblical references and "blueprints" delivered by God in mind. The saintly shrine is included within the thickness of the church walls, but for most of its history the shrine did not contain the miraculous body of Hosios Loukas, whose relics were looted during in the thirteenth century. Despite the absence of the saintly relics, the idea

prevailed among believers that the building complex corporeally and diachronically yet consistently commemorated the saint and the locations of sacred events.

Similarly, Belgin-Henry analyzes a prolonged period of the construction of the monastic and pilgrimage center of St. Symeon the Younger at the Wondrous Mountain near Antioch, and reveals how the entire complex started during the life of St. Symeon, who envisioned an architecturally highly unconventional church at its core. The column atop which the saint spent most of his lifetime marked the most sacred space of this “vertical church,” essentially an open space vertically delineated by the other structures in the complex. As the saint decided to remain physically immobile on top of the column, it was through the Divine Liturgy and the activity of saint’s mind and prayers that this sacred space was activated. Belgin-Henry aims to rectify misunderstandings of the site based on comparative studies with other pilgrimage centers in the wider region and shows how, because of the most intimate interaction between the living saint and the sacred, the complex only later became a pilgrimage site and perceived as especially powerful since it commemorated the memory of such an intense relationship between the human body and sacred space.

In contrast to Belgin-Henry, who focuses on the living but immobile saint, Milanović examines the afterlife of the bodily remains of holy people. He details the process of *translatio* of holy relics, in which the bodies of saints were moved by the followers because of their belief that the being of the saints inclusive of their mortal bodies were imbued with divine agency that transcended death. The incorruptible and miracle-working holy relics strengthened believers’ faith in the Divine’s overarching presence.

In his inspiring chapter, Dennis demonstrates that *perichoresis* with its powerful imagery of dynamic movement of the divine persons was visually represented in a mosaic surviving in Albenga monastery’s baptistery, even before such a concept was theologically clarified. *Perichoresis* became a mental image of the divine persons processing around, between, and through one another as their identities were unified into a singular Godhead while maintaining their individuality.

Medieval devotees and beholders would have been familiar with culturally defined liturgical rites, devotional practices, and triumphal rituals associated with specific images and their spatial settings. In turn, these sacred images in their sacred settings would become spatial icons capable of evoking the bodily movements of the participants in actual places, and also of gesturing to sacred space beyond their literal borders, most often pointing to the heavenly realm. Bodily presence, either through the presence of the living saint or through images of sacred figures or the bodily remains of saints, would be particularly powerful in this regard as demonstrated by Lidova, Carile, Marsengill, Milanović, Belgin-Henry, and Bogdanović. The “swirling” Cross, which is represented in the apex of the vault in the Albenga Baptistery, shows how the conceptual idea of an “animated” image that is inseparable from its setting could equally evoke the spiritual and physical movement of the devotees. Dennis recognizes in the visual realization of the “rotating” cross a form of permeating, rotational movement, or *perichoresis*, which implied interpenetration and interweaving, with God, Christ,

and the Holy Spirit moving fluidly through one another as though engaged in a rhythmic, rotational motility. At the same time, Dennis claims how this powerful spatial icon functioned as a paradigm for understanding the relationship between architecture and bodily movement within the baptismal space.

By revisiting the historical and theological contexts in which medieval beholders understood not only their holy icons that stood for the embodiment of the sacred, but also sacred space as a living presence rather than a staged setting for more obvious human agency and actions, chapters in this volume also highlight the agency of sacred space. This reassessment of the design of sacred space that occurred diachronically in various locales nevertheless points towards a sacred totality with reciprocal, closely interconnected relationships between the body and sacred space. It particularly describes these relationships in phenomenological terms of how they can be experienced and perceived through the senses while consistently alluding to those aspects of the sacred, which remained beyond full comprehension. Still, the human body and its embodiments of holiness within sacred spaces allowed for the perceived intersection of divine and human agencies.

These human–divine intersections within sacred space often acquired iconic presence for the medieval devotees, whereas the active, animated presence of such spatial icons aimed to approach the spiritual state in its totality. For devotees actively participating in such events, neither these spatial icons nor their perception were illusionary, as participants would presuppose divine activity (*energia*) and the potential revelation of ultimate truth.² Hence, as many in this volume elucidate through selected case studies, a spatial icon is not any kind of shadowy imitation of the ideal, but had an ontological value, which through its corporeality unveiled ideas about the intangible sacred and, for the believers, *was* a real presence. Above all, this notion of real presence conditions the experience and perception of the sacred.

Iconic perception and the chain of interrelated stimuli

Iconic perception of the sacred, occasionally in our chapters associated with the memory of images, emerges as the predominant perception of the body and sacred spaces. Yet the mechanisms of such iconic perception are difficult to explain. Rather than a passive perception on the part of the devotees, who once they had encountered the holy would simply pull out accumulated imagery and sensory stimuli from a large storage deposit within themselves, most chapters suggest that iconic perception was a result of coordinated stimuli and culturally absorbed formal information. Several chapters suggest that the perception of these complex iconic systems depended on a chain of interrelated and coordinated stimuli expressed through form, medium, and complex spatial arrangements, inclusive of light, color, sound, tactile and haptic qualities, or bodily movements.

Carile reveals in her chapter how through a chain of symbolic elements, and in order to convey the sacrality of the imperial family and their embodiment of the Byzantine Empire as the earthly counterpart to the Heavenly Kingdom, the represented bodies of the Byzantine emperors in sacred spaces were associated

with the holiness of sacred relics, holy icons, and their installations and locations in the sanctuaries. By focusing on the image of Maria Regina in John VII's Oratory in Rome, Lidova suggests how monumental icons painted on massive church walls could have been understood as having their own, closely related but independent, bodies from the church structure. The notion of such monumental icons brings forward the evanescence of the medium of a sacred image in both visual and anthropological views. Lidova shows how due to its size, formal treatment, unusual iconography, and the solemnity of the imperial attire, the figure of Mary dominated the whole space of the Oratory and its decoration and was clearly perceived as a sacred icon rather than decorative image.

The relationships between the materials and forms of sacred images and spatial icons are highlighted in several chapters. Materials chosen for the objects that framed the holy were perceived important and communicated the complex materiality of the sacred to the medieval people of the Mediterranean. Lidova, Carile, Marsengill, Milanović, Dennis, Belgin-Henry, and Bogdanović all speak of the quality of materials for framing the sacred, especially those with glowing and shimmering qualities: gold, ivory, and marble being most often used. Such thinking was culturally conditioned and theoretically nurtured, as explained by Ivanović in his chapter on Areopagite thought, which was expanded by other theological texts that, throughout the medieval period, further developed the concept that high-quality materials held the capacity to evoke the purity and glory of the divine.

In such "complex materiality," as Lidova appropriately termed it, form was inseparable from the materiality of the holy. Form recurrently proved to have a capacity to transpose the most complex and abstract ideas related to the holy either into iconic images of sacred figures or iconic images of sacred space. Bogdanović shows that generic imagery of canopied architectural installations in Hosios Loukas stood for the altar, the saintly shrine, the memory image of the Temple and Heavenly Jerusalem, and the church as a sacred building and community. Marsengill posits that it is form that is disclosed in physical material that is the essential medium of a Byzantine icon, while Lidova, Dennis, and Bogdanović contend that in such complex materiality, all aspects including form, materials, and size of the (spatial) icons themselves greatly enhanced sensory perception of the sacred.

Especially revealing are the case studies that clarify how the macro-size of sacred icons in relationship to the micro-size of architectural installations, such as altar canopies and saintly shrines in architectural settings, could create the most intimate, human-scaled settings and therefore provide for private, personalized encounters with the holy. Bogdanović speaks of such nesting of human-sized canopies accompanied by large-scale images of Hosios Loukas in his monastery, while Lidova highlights how the private environment of the John VII's Oratory combined with the large, painted image of Mary had the capacity to evoke the presence of the real physical body of a person and the real presence of the holy. In a larger spatial network like the John VII's Oratory or Hosios Loukas, the location of private, intimate installations in relationship to the altar space or other focal

and especially sacred spots allowed for a complex spatial and performative depth, permitting the merging of various sacred performances while still maintaining distinguishable individual and group encounters with the holy. Hence, Lidova, Belgin-Henry, and Bogdanović speak of the complex spatial merging of private devotion and communal liturgical performances, while Carile, Marsengill, and Dennis emphasize the privileged locations of sacred images in the apse of the church, at the apex of a dome, or the vaulted ceilings in imperial and ecclesiastical settings, often pointing to cosmic significance and the heavenly realm. The painted representations of important sacred figures or their actual positions within sacred space would have often been perceived as occupying a place “in-between.” Carile details how the place of the Byzantine emperors in the Christian hierarchy of the empire corresponds with their visual representations in Hagia Sophia, their bodies “visually represented underneath the image of God, yet their status put them above all others, in an intermediate location between the summit of the structure and the floor – a level that was not heavenly but not earthly either.”³ She demonstrates how the location of imperial images was always in connection to the apse or the sanctuary and that beholders perceived the bodies of the emperors as being sacred and participating in and benefitting from the holiness of the sacred space, thus augmenting the sacredness.

The questions of singularity and multiplicity in the creation and perception of the sacred emerged in chapters by Lidova, Carile, Bogdanović, Marsengill, Dennis, and Milanović. For example, Carile analyzes how the sacredness of the imperial power was related to the cosmological hierarchy of the sacred and expressed by both the depicted and real presence of the emperors, in selected locations within the palace or a church. Milanović explains how an unusually “large number of figures compressed into a small space may have been intended to generate an empathetic encounter between the viewer and the Trier ivory.”⁴ Lidova further elucidates how the multiplication of images, including the reproduction of miraculous icons, was not the only or the most important factor for the perceptions of their exclusivity. She especially turns her attention to the decoration in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome in order to demonstrate how certain monumental images were created as monumental icons, arranged within extensive pictorial compositions and additionally highlighted with decorative elements from the very outset. These icons evoked profound individual devotional responses, which is confirmed by the numerous surviving traces of nails and bracings for votive offerings.

Liminality, “being-place,” and the importance of space

Liminality, both as the sensory threshold for the encounter with the holy and as both a locus and spiritual phase for devotees in their transitional movement towards the sacred, emerges as a critical aspect of the perception of the holy experience in all chapters in this volume.

Milanović examines how the sacred was delivered. By focusing on the representation of the *translatio* on the Trier Ivory, he highlights the role of relics and relic shrines. The holy relics are a kind of liminal sacred body, neither fully

deceased nor alive, but continually present in the lives of the believers. Milanović demonstrates that historical sources confirm that communities would often gather together in worship at the tomb of a martyr or a founding bishop. He further puts forward the capacity of relic shrines to fuse past and present in a sacred locus, providing both material and spatial links back to the original event of martyrdom, here characterized more in terms of the martyrs' witnessing God rather than referring exclusively to their human suffering or death for their Christian faith. At the same time, by actively participating in the religious rituals and by making such spatial-temporal links with the sacred, a sense of historical continuity within Christian communities was created. Milanović highlights how this sense of historical continuity with the sacred was often re-created in imagery of the *translatio* of the holy relics. Lidova, Carile, Marsengill, Belgin-Henry, and Bogdanović reach similar conclusions about this vital quality of sacred bodies and relics – their *liminality* – as critical to the perception of the holy.

These sacred bodies existed in liminal holy states, framed by and within materials that are the liminal boundary between material and immaterial. Indeed, the liminal, framing structures themselves evoked an encounter with the holy, enacting diachronic relationships between physical presence and absence, empirical evidence, and the faithful's expectation of the hereafter. By examining the Trier Ivory, Milanović concludes that the relics required the image to provide material evidence for the faithful, forging a palpable connection between the saint and his devotees. Lidova examines the tectonic treatment of the image of the sacred figure and the associated relics as bodily remains, in particular. She shows how in the John VII's Oratory, the delineation of a mural icon of the Mother of God in a double frame arranged within its tight niche was done not only to distinguish the sacred image spatially from the rest of decoration, but also to provide an additional place for the holy relics immured right beneath the holy icon.

Relics have an indeterminate status as a human body and point to the liminal in-between state; between the earthly, material, and inhabited world, on one hand, and the heavenly, immaterial, and placeless realm, on the other. By using various devices, frames of the icons, reliquaries, shrines, doors, architectural installations, and entire buildings such as churches and baptisteries, people in the medieval Mediterranean physically and conceptually framed the saintly body or the liturgical body (the Eucharistic body of Christ) and thereby underscored the perception that the human body could be transformed into a vehicle of divine agency. The nonnegotiable differences between the essence and nature of the inhabited world and the sacred were brought very close. Yet, since they were perceived as part of a larger network of sacredness, the differences were never entirely dissolved.

Carile argues that imperial imagery "was always in the proximity to the sanctuary or relics, signifying that the imperial power derived from and was integral to the sacred Christian order of the empire."⁵ Moreover, she shows how the two imperial panels in the sanctuary of San Vitale represented earthly imperial power as embodied by the emperor and the empress and visualized their proximity to God, while the iconographic program of the panel most likely mirrored the ceremony of imperial entrance into the church. Milanović further contends that

holy relics relied upon the viewer's iconic perception of them as fully embodied saints in order to establish sacred presence, in this way forging palpable and relatable connections between the saints and their devotees. Ultimately, these layers of perception lead to the Incarnation as the major liminal event in the history of humankind. The sacred event of *translatio* could have been witnessed by devotees in various locations, including public and civic spaces. Milanović highlights how the public area surrounding the Chalkê gate, the entrance gate of the imperial palace in Constantinople, was a liminal site *par excellence*. In the Trier Ivory, it defines and describes the locus for the ceremonial procession of the holy relics. Yet its significance reaches beyond this pictorial function to evoke in the minds of viewers how the Chalkê as a liminal site was a sacred threshold: for example, Byzantine texts tell us that emperors and empresses could hear the voice of God at this very location.

Spatial dialogues that include elements of sound and the spoken or written word within the liminality of sacred space are mentioned in several other chapters, as well. Hence, Dennis in his chapter on the Albenga baptistery emphasizes not only the sound of water during the rite of the baptism, but also the words pronounced aloud during various sacred rites and the aural dimension of the inscriptions found there. Belgin-Henry explains how St. Symeon the Younger may have preached and conducted liturgical rites atop his column, adding a layer of sound to his iconic presence. Marsengill draws attention to Neophytos and Luke the Stylite as framed icons that nevertheless converse with followers.

Many chapters in this volume discuss the liminality of saintly bodies as sacred presences that are yet often elusive – or absent – and evocative of things invisible and unseen, especially if the holy person is tangible and visible to devotees only through their relics, images, and the diachronic connective tissue of memory. This issue draws attention to the need for a more fluid and dynamic definition of painted and spatial icons as inhabiting specific loci and therefore embodying a kind of “being-place.” In other words, the body of the sacred, inclusive of sacred figures and the liturgical body, remained closely interconnected with their holy spaces, in many ways defining these spaces as much as the spaces were made to accommodate and frame their holy presences. At the same time, they allude to higher realities that are beyond spatial frames and definitions. This is true even in cases of *translatio*, wherein the memory of the event, ceremony, and the new sacred space (and sacralization of space) resulting from the movement of saints' relics created a shift in the perception of the holy body within civic and sacred space. Also relevant to this notion is Carile's analysis of representations of imperial figures, in which the imperial family's portraits occupy specific sacred and civic spaces that equally refer to their symbolic and ideological “being-place.”

Reiterating this notion of the specific and evocative “being-place” of holy bodies, Marsengill's examination of the influence of icons on the perception of the human body demonstrates culturally deliberate and consciously made “comparisons between painted icons and the living or deceased bodies of saints, as well as between images of Christ and the saint as an icon of Christ.”⁶ She considers contextually and conceptually complex exchanges of ideas about the spiritual,

visual, and perceptual presence in icons. St. Neophytos, who was venerated as a saint already during his lifetime, she claims,

may have drawn upon the image of Christ to reflect his role as Christ's icon, but he was also an icon of himself. The saint was the medium of visibility for his icon instead of (the typical order of events whereby) the icon was the medium of the visibility of the saint.⁷

Other studies in this volume align with Marsengill's conclusions that the icon as a spiritual state rather than material object became the epitome of metaphysical transfiguration even while it was visually and perceptually conceptualized.

Notions of the icon as a transcendent spiritual state, on one hand, and ontological and epistemological qualities of icons in physical space, on the other, prompted several contributors to investigate the specific inhabiting of "place" that was perceived to exist for the bodies of icons within sacred space, especially with regard to the larger decorative programs surrounding them of which they were both physically part and yet conceptually and perceptually independent. Lidova shows how the monumental icons in the Oratory of John VII, and likely elsewhere, were actually perceived by the viewer as independent "bodies" within the church space and its decoration despite being attached to the walls and set in relation to and in dialogue with other mural images. Indeed, spatial dialogues resonated not only between the complex iconographic program but also between devotees, the holy images, and the relics that were installed in the niche that was also painted with an icon of the Virgin. Additionally, Lidova reconstructs the original setting of the much larger icon of the Orant Virgin in the Oratory of John VII in order to reveal how this image – by its proximity to other images as well as due to its inherent significance – evoked a wide range of associations with the Incarnation, the Nativity, and various miraculous icons of Mary. Moreover, the icon was spatially and conceptually juxtaposed with the most venerated relic, Veronica's Veil (the "true icon"), which was most likely at some point displayed in the Oratory in the vicinity of the image of the Orant Virgin. In the Albenga baptistery, Dennis deciphers spatial dialogue through the bodily movements of the devotees participating in the baptismal ritual. These spatial and ritual constructs facilitated the perception of the space as "inhabited" by the dynamic icon of the tri-part Godhead, which visualized the presence of the Holy Spirit within the space. In this way, the spiritual transformations taking place were physicalized and visualized – both within the space and its decoration as well as on the part of the participants – within an architectural setting that functioned as an animated vessel, itself becoming another iconic "body."

The ontological notions of "being-place" and framing as put forward by Athanasius of Alexandria and John of Damascus are further juxtaposed with modern philosophical ideas about the physical and conceptual framing of the sacred in Bogdanović's chapter. She acknowledges how some positivist trends and, to some extent, post-structuralist approaches rejected the idea of the specific visible and spatial expression of transcendental and metaphysical transformation perhaps too prematurely. Dennis, Marsengill, and Bogdanović all show that distinctions

between living and represented icons are often softened in order to convey the visibility and eternal presence of the sacred, yet that the separation between various entities and the multiplicity of their visuality was strongly reinforced by religious practice that maintained a perception of the body conforming to the idea that all created beings remained imbued with their own distinct properties even while having the potential to transcend into another spiritual – and therefore physical and visual – expression of themselves. By extension, the importance of sacred spaces in their universality *and* specificity, where viewers gained individual experience within an all-subsuming network of holiness, becomes apparent. In this way, viewers were granted the opportunity to contemplate the Divine through the perception of transformative and assimilated multiplicity. Indeed, the potential to gain knowledge of the divine through the complex experiences described in this volume can be argued to rest on the concept and practice of iconic perception.

The potential of iconic perception and noetic contemplation to shape knowledge of the sacred

Iconic perception of the sacred in the medieval Mediterranean was intellectually discursive. In the cosmological order described by Dionysius the Areopagite, noetic contemplation is closely related to the perception of the sacred as eternal beauty infused with divine light. Ivanović demonstrates how the Areopagite and those who followed him position noetic contemplation in close relation to the perception of the sacred and shows how this contemplation was conceived without sharp distinctions between body and soul (or what we tend to call the mind in modern discourse). Ivanović concludes that perception of the sacred is neither fully discursive nor entirely iconic, including both discursive reasoning and perception through the senses. The interrelated iconic perception and noetic contemplation of the sacred provides a better way to understand and describe the multidimensionality of the body and its relationship to sacred space beyond discussion of the representational that has dominated positivist scholarship. In this context, especially revealing are the case studies in this volume that point to the practice of veiling sacred images and holy relics, and that preclude a visual experience of the sacred in order to stimulate noetic contemplation of the sacred in the abstract.

Extending representational space to include the beholder within sacred space, even if physically framed or otherwise physically and visually inaccessible, was done through various strategies in the medieval Mediterranean. In case of the Trier Ivory, it was achieved by nesting representations of the translation of the relics from one location to another, transforming the arch of the city gate into the recognizable form of a saintly shrine. In the monastery of Hosios Loukas, the representational space was expanded by multiplying images of the saint above and near his shrine, but also in other locations within the church proper as if expanding the physical limits of the locus of the saintly shrine itself and evoking the limitless properties of the sacred. In the Oratory of John VII, the practice of covering the icon with a veil prevented direct visual interaction between the devotee and the image of the sacred while at the same time it stimulated the opening

of inner, intellectual eyes for the contemplation of the sacred. Despite the visual abundance available in the early Christian Albenga baptistery, the ritual space of the baptistery was delineated by its physical properties and perceived through the senses; yet those initiates receiving baptism would have been encouraged to receive spiritual vision and to formulate a new understanding of the sacred as something that is also invisible and beyond space and time. Moreover, Dennis insists that this “doctrine of liminality for heavenly, immaterial bodies . . . was mirrored in the physical movement and discourse of catechumens occupying the baptismal space below.”⁸ Dennis’ conceptual approach also permits the integration of Trinitarian and baptismal theology, further broadening the inquiry.

The complex perceptions of the sacred through icons and spatial icons analyzed in this volume persuasively promote their capacity to shape our own knowledge about the sacred. Sacred icons emerge as being deeply ontological, ethical, and political. Specially venerated sacred icons and their embodiments in various objects may have performed a function similar to rituals in that they were involved in certain actions meant to establish a viewer’s relationship with the Divine. Carile, Milanović, and Dennis uncover political, theological, and ideological meanings of the sacred by highlighting the power and authority of the human body and images of the body in the sacred space. Therefore, Carile demonstrates how the setting of imperial images within the palace both emphasized the sacredness and acted as a powerful means of political ideology. She explains how images of the imperial family are not mere “donor portraits or devotional depictions, but involve deeper and more complex meanings that are closely connected to their historical and physical contexts.”⁹ She argues that her conclusions are not only filtered through the textual sources and the perceptions of writers who discussed the role of the imperial body, but are complementarily grounded in the material evidence when analyzed with the concept of iconic perception in mind. Carile claims that, “the real body of emperors represented in images immortalized to the viewer the presence of the empire as a sacred institution.”¹⁰ Her analysis reveals how space became sanctified by the presence of the imperial sacred body. The same type of imperial representations could significantly augment the sacredness of spaces already perceived to be holy, such as the sanctuary of the church associated with the Eucharist and liturgical body of Christ, or the imperial palace associated with the holy *basilieia* itself. In his chapter, Dennis shows that *perichoresis* evoked the complex interrelationships among the three persons of the Holy Trinity and carried strong theological meaning in the creation of the Trinitarian space of the Albenga monastery, but also that it complemented a political agenda against Arians who denied the co-equal and co-eternal status of Christ with God the Father.

The Byzantine teleological and determinist construct, deeply anchored in the Incarnational event and iconic presence of Christ, was most directly related to the iconic perception and noetic contemplation of the sacred. Marsengill argues that

a potentiality is simultaneous with its actuality, even if they do not co-exist. In this dynamic, Christ’s icon came into being at the moment of his Incarnation, an idea that was presented by Theodore of Stoudite when he defended, almost

counter-intuitively, that there could be no prototype without its icon . . . this means that St. Neophytos' future painted icon was implicit in his living appearance just as his future icon assumed the existence of his prototype, and neither could exist without the other.¹¹

Bogdanović elucidates the use of architectural frames to delineate the various glorious spaces in Hosios Loukas. She shows how these frames not only guided the viewing experience of the holy, but also molded the entire experience of the sacred as it took shape within the faithful. The perception of the Byzantines was, however, that these personal encounters with the holy were not solitary, illusionary occurrences in their own minds, but rather, as contemporaneous sources recorded, occurrences the perception of which lay beyond themselves. Thus, these occurrences were understood as manifest through divine agency and for mysterious reasons.

The concepts of liminality have theoretical consequences for understanding iconic perception and noetic contemplation. Dominant positivistic scholarship understands transcendental as aesthetical, often virtual, but never as immanently spiritual. The errors of the positivist approaches are particularly prominent in the attempts to fully dissolve liminality.

Absolute qualities of the sacred can be described, but they remain inaccessible to empirical research. Hence, complementing conclusions from the empirical case studies examined in this volume, and Dionysius the Areopagite's clear distinction between the inhabited, material world and the heavenly realm, which opened our investigations, considers this inaccessibility to contemplate fully the body and sacred space and our incapability to understand their lives as rigorously as we may wish. Vital dimensions of sacred place and memory of sacred events, however, condition iconic perceptions of the sacred through human agency, body, and sensory experiences.

Notes

- 1 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1961), 21.
- 2 See the chapters by Ivanović and Marsengill in this volume for detailed analysis of the role of *energia* for the philosophical framework of critical thought that icons convey truth, not an illusionary image. See also Stratis Papaioannou, "Byzantine *Energeia* and Theories of Representation." *Ekphrasis: la représentation des monuments dans les littératures byzantine et byzantino-slaves – Réalités et imaginaires, Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011), 48–60.
- 3 Chapter by Carile in this volume, esp. 71.
- 4 Chapter by Milanović in this volume, esp. 117.
- 5 Chapter by Carile in this volume, esp. 76.
- 6 Chapter by Marsengill in this volume, esp. 97.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Chapter by Dennis in this volume, esp. 142.
- 9 Chapter by Carile in this volume, esp. 60.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Chapter by Marsengill in this volume, esp. 98.

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